THE Hudson REVIEW

HAYDEN CARRUTH:
Independence Man

MARVIN MUDRICK:
The Ogre at the Feast of Life

VERNON YOUNG:
Cinema Borealis

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS:
Bounding Lycidas

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD:
Tones of Criticism

Poems by WILLIAM STAFFORD, PHILIP LEVINE, D. J. ENRIGHT, ZULFIKAR GHOSE.

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WILLIAM STAFFORD

Wherever Anything Can Turn, Thought Can Turn

One old farm at a time, winter is working south
tonight. At the beach, lanes of the sky and
a few stars are finding clearings in the pines.
In the cold mountains, in that surprise air,
storms can't find their frantic relatives that
stir in the rivers. Grass is learning
which way the wind prefers.

Lakes hang above us, pieces of sky
in the mountains, a few sharp edges of blue
that the pines can't smother. Trout break
through that glass, and it all mends by the
thousand over the deep, and the stars troll by.
Gravel comes down, touches the flood, decides
to try a little of that slow, delicious swoon
beside the deep—and, oh, where is gravel now?
We hear it find its island, breathe again.

Here the waves in my cup have taken me
for that terrifying instant to the edge of the world:
people around me have turned into strangers.
I hurry out where the long evening,
greater than anything in our room, invents itself
westward. Day jumps all the fences. I try
to think ahead of any day. A million great
ideas perch around us. I begin to beat with my hand
all over those lakes to put out the silver fire.

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For A While

In the long cavern, after the candle,
a sigh that made no wind
lived along the floor and stilled.

Now these words from elsewhere touch
that room where it is another time:
it is one second after you forever.

I want to leave that dark resting there
and come back here where it is bright and
unimportant, as if you never lived.

Wind World

One time Wind World
found a way through the mountains
and called on Sky. Their
child was Thirst, who lives
wherever those two go, and brings
them ragged little dolls he
finds in the desert.

Wind World likes it near
the ground, and hurries there
even on still days, low.
You can see him shaking hands
with himself in the grass.

Wind World always made friends with
Indians, and they wore feathers for him.
Even today when he finds an arrowhead
in the dust or sand
he just leaves it there.

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Wind World likes things that
move, but you notice
he has to pass something still
for him really to sing a song.

A Joshua tree near Mojave
told me these things one day
about Wind World.

For the Shtick People

At birth, launched into light,
we forget the one great gift—
how over and over again our lives
curve into a story that lives on like seaweed
undulating in and out of the dark;
but that some—the shtick people—
never know light:
shadows are all that they have.

Every autumn for them I choose
one leaf racing along the stormy
beach, and follow and watch till it
loses itself where Arribery the seal
that has patrolled for years at Neskowin
comes briefly out of the deep,
a sleek small head in the froth.

Our eyes meet, and he knows
I have been kind once more to those people
who yearn so toward us at night
that they quench our matches and candles
in their dear love for the little we have,
shadows of shadows of shadows.

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Cloves

1.
Whatever my enemies find, I have to face—
taste that false man who provides
my world, myself. That clove turns real:
they are right.

2.
I try to eat the subtle mushroom
arched through all that the world gives me;
then fear surfaces. I taste clove,
the great reality under the earth.

3.
Here in the now part of history, bundled
together in these rooms, blinded and dumb
so that we can last without shrilling
upward and out—suddenly aware, I bite clove.

4.
When out of the bland hours we let come
to us a start that makes us religious,
it is church, wherever it is: we bite clove
even while we speak our mild sentences.

5.
You and I come different ways to every
hill, and cross at paths that never
will be finally the same. There is
a clove we step on, passing.

6.
When you travel, scenes follow you
all night, pressing lightly on your
lips, and your country is only the one
lasting in the accent of your denials.

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Days for the World

That the world have days,
we linger at the Coast.
Storms beat at our fire.
Sky arches on.

In all these little coves people
flex. They move. Each day a
pat by the sun, the years have gone.
For long, no one has thought them.

We build our lean-to marker
—that people stayed here.
Evenings, at the water's edge
we stand and think us on.

Colors of the sky go red,
mother of pearl, gray—
another day for the world.

Things to Want

A river dreams a lake; the lake, a mountain.
Inside the mountain, fish dream silver.
When I sleep, I dream that river,

And summer again, the farm so deep it
glimmers, a world that could be saved
this year, if hay could save it.

I dream our life, a thudding sound;
I take it outside in the rain: *everything.*
I hold my hands out: everything.

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

Independence Man

Four years ago my family and I, with no experience whatever at gypsying, set off on a tour of the U. S., during which we traveled by car and lived, not quite all the time but almost, in a tent. It was a grand, meandering circuit of the forty-eight contiguous states, with brief excursions into Mexico and Canada. When we returned, after more than four months and 21,000 miles, I tried to make a book of it, but our vagabondage had spoiled me and the work was slow. It was also hard; travel writing, I discovered, is far more difficult than I had imagined. To proceed from Point X to Point Z without recounting trivia, when one is sitting at the typewriter in a state of total recall, is bitchy work. Fred Morgan was kind enough to read and criticize my manuscript at one stage of its development, and then, doubly kind, asked me to choose excerpts from it for Hudson. *Here they are at last. No chance, as far as I can see, to make a connected narrative, so I have chosen these passages almost at random, some verbatim from a diary I kept on the road, others written in retrospect. Here and there I have inserted necessary explanations in brackets. The three protagonists: my wife Rose Marie, who comes from East Germany and is known in writing by her initials; our three-year-old son David, who is nicknamed the Bo; and myself.*

At one point in our trip we were met at a parking lot by a huge, roly-poly black attendant with a cluster of fluttering green tags in his fist. He looked at our car, a SAAB, and then at the rows of big gleaming cars on either side. "Don't know if I can take such a little bug in here," he said.

I put on a smile of mock chagrin. "It may be little but it's all I have," I said.

He examined our Vermont plates and travel-worn appearance. "I got news for you," he confided. "It may be little but you're independent, man, in-de-pendent!"

It was a bit of existential theater, the kind of friendly, even affectionate, multi-level horseplay that makes encounters between strangers different in the U. S. from elsewhere. The black

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man was pretty damned independent himself, I think, and in his honor, and in my own, I called my book Independence Man.

MORNINGS, AFTERNOONS, EVENINGS: enough of them make a lifetime, and in retrospect what can we reclaim? Only moments from the mass of moments. On a trip it is the same, except that one remembers more of them and they seem sharper, clearer, simpler.

Ten o'clock on the morning of April 9th was one of my moments, beside a small green field on the road from Leakey to Camp Wood, Texas. If I could stop my life, freeze it, at a particular time, I might choose . . . but what folly to think of it. The road had been recommended by the woman behind the desk at Garner camp. She called it a "country-go-to-market road," making it sound like one of our woodland dirt-tracks in New England; but it was paved highway, asphalt, in good condition. The automotive life, as lived in the west, is very different from that in the east, as we were learning. Out there any road with curves is "country-go-to-market."

It was a splendid route, as the woman had promised. Nameless mountains: nothing grand, no lofty peaks, just geological ruin, ancient, weathered shapes crumbling away toward the canyon where, as we rounded a curve, we found ourselves suddenly looking down a slot to the hazy pink flatland fifty miles away. We inched along, stopping often to look. I remember particularly that green field, a triangle beside the road, fenced and sown to grass. Across the way scrubland led upward, thorny bushes and cacti, and we saw goats high above us, peering quizzically down under the steep blue sky. Ironwood bushes bloomed on the mountainside with a sloe-colored, purplish-grayish flower. Everything was interesting, even the partly crushed armadillo that lay on the pavement. Nearby was some predator's midden: bones, fur, feathers, scraps of flesh. A wild turkey, lean and long-necked, strutted away from us, fast and then slow and then fast again, like a skittish barnyard hen. Overhead a redtailed hawk soared low, tilting to show his russet feathers. A deer studied us shyly from behind a bush. A vermillion flycatcher perched on a fencepost,

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glittering. Over the meadow scissor-tailed flycatchers fluttered together, perhaps in a mating rite, up and down the air, chittering like canaries, and their unbelievable long tails—unbelievable to northerners—seemed not in the least awkard, but graceful and suitable. And then flowers: thousands of them, thirty or forty species. Texas in spring is a garden. We wandered farther and farther from the car, looking, peering, exclaiming. We saw no one. We were alone, at peace with ourselves, with the world and the season; an active peace, full of curiosity and interest.

What we were doing was establishing a claim. This morning was ours and this place was ours. Damn it, if the world contained the least principle of justice that green meadow and the mountainside opposite would have been handed to us then and there, especially since they looked as if no one else wanted them. It was our kind of country; we were convinced of it. We could stay forever.

In the end, of course, curiosity drove us onward. At Camp Wood we found our first genuine southwestern town, like a movie set. A few buildings strung along the highway, sunburnt stucco, low tiled roofs, wooden arcades and galleries. We had coffee in a fly-specked café while we listened to the cowboys at a round table, sitting with their big hats tipped backward. Arthurians. A pouting waitress, blonde and jiggly, sashayed up to them and away, like a moth to flame. Drawling banter: who put the last quarter in the juke box?—meaning who put the last you-know-what in you-know-where. She was the belle of Camp Wood, you couldn't miss her. When she almost got her ass slapped, but dodged away in time, so that the cowboy who had done it lost his balance and his chair skittered across the tile floor, everyone laughed.

At the gas station a Mexican boy, sixteen or seventeen. I said it looked like poor country for earning a living. Smiling, shyly proud: "Nobody leeve round here but the goats, they the only ones can make eet"—a goat himself. I liked him.

We rejoined our main route at Brackettville, and continued westward to Del Rio, arriving at noon. Terrific heat. The sun seemed everywhere, not just in the sky; dripping golden fire on all sides. We stopped at a garage and bought a cake of ice from a vending machine, but water streamed from it as I carried it from the machine to the trunk of the car. We went into a

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supermarket. Cool air-conditioning, like alcohol on our burnt faces; darkly tinted windows to shut out the glare. It was an oasis, and not just for us, since the store was jammed; people shuffling along, slow and listless, not buying anything to speak of. Most were Mexicans. Dark faces, sturdy short bodies, eyes flickering in sunburnt creases; friendly, secretly amused.

White buildings, broad rooflines, wide streets: a riparian town, everything funneling toward the big bridge over the river. Perhaps we should have gone that way. Mexico, Panama, Rio! We didn't, but headed northwestward, following the curve of the Rio Grande, though not within sight of it. Instead the highway launched into nowhere. I don't know when we crossed officially into the desert; naturally there was no signpost saying fantasy on one side and real life on the other. But for us the fantasy began just out of Del Rio. Eastward we had still seen occasional trees, but westward there was none. Only cactus, brown grass, bushes, stones, gravel, broad swathes of barren earth. Wildflowers still bloomed by the road, but as we progressed the blue and red colors subsided, replaced by little yellow or white flowers, most of which we could not identify. We saw prickly pear in abundance, sometimes large clumps, and low-growing yuccas, ironwood, mesquite, creosote bush. The heat and glare seemed unreal. Our eyes bled with light, our skins tightened crisply. We can't be suffering this, we thought, it's too much, we will die—but we were very much alive.

Our little car suffered too. The SAAB (at least the earlier models) was never intended for that country. Our water temperature gauge registered continually in the red, sometimes at the very top, 212°, and then after a bit it would slip down a trifle, though never to anything near normal operating temperature. At first I couldn't interpret these fluctuations, but then I realized that the land was not utterly flat, as it looked, but was imperceptibly undulating. Our gauge told us what our eyes could not see, we were rocking insensibly in a long, slow rhythm, like a raft on a calm sea, so that our engine became hotter as we climbed and a degree or two cooler as we descended. I watched the needle nervously, wondering when the engine would seize up or blow up. But it never did, and eventually I became used to driving with a boiling motor, hearing the little burps of steam escape from the pressure cap.

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We drove in continuous excitement that day, all our awareness concentrated in our aching eyes. This was what we had come for, the unexpected and unpredictable. Everything we had seen so far, even the majesty of Okefenokee or the glamor of Ocala, had been what we had known it would be; but this was a new, strange world. Forcibly we experienced the sense of dreaming while we were awake. It was like driving through a country unknown to us but somehow in our blood, like our deepest subconscious intimations of hell. Fantastic shapes of cactus. Colors of rock and earth no waking imagination could conceive. No photographs could have prepared us for it. Dry gullies snaked toward us on rubbled earth, the stones in their beds glistening like skulls. Vultures hunched on a revetment by a bridge. The bottom of a broad ditch cracked in pentagrams, symbols of barrenness. Not a house, not a habitation. If ranch houses are there, they are far from the road.

A filling station and café, forty miles from the nearest neighbor. The proprietor, grizzled and dour, fills our tank. Says only "yup" and "nope," in a German accent. Will not answer RM's German. Makes no move to inspect our radiator, which we, northerners, think nothing of; but later we damned near boil out. We stop at another filling station in the tiny town of Marathon; ask to *buy* water, since we need no gas. The proprietor, a young man with long black sideburns, growls. "It's free." But does not show me where the spigot is, nor offer the use of his water can. I bumble around, embarrassed and angry, and at last find the water, filling our plastic jug, then splash the water nervously and wastefully when I pour it into the radiator.

Our first pronghorns. A small herd. "Pronghorn!" I shout. I can hardly believe it. We stop, and put the glasses on them, and they turn and run, white rump patches flashing. But they do not go far. They turn toward us in curiosity: long black-and-white faces, gracefully curving horns, like African queens.

Our first big canyon, the Pecos River, which we come upon unexpectedly. Deep gorge in the tableland; from a mile away you look across it without seeing it. A thin bridge arches over the top like a thread. We turn off into a lookout area, with parking lot and roofed picnic tables, before we cross. A thousand feet below, at the depth of the abyss, a winding emerald snake:

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the river. Spectacular many-colored cliffs, jutting pinnacles. A thousand feet down? I'm guessing, it might be five hundred or fifteen hundred. My acrophobia turns on instantly—terrified giddiness—and I retreat to the parking lot, where I sedulously inspect the SAAB. RM and the Bo, fearless, run hand-in-hand on the brink, peering down, exclaiming and delighting. At last we go on. On the thready bridge I grip the wheel with rigid, wet hands. I could not have crossed it alone for ten thousand dollars.

Vultures spiralling in the distance. Descending on an invisible circular staircase to their meal. Drifting down. The one at the top is the lookout, they say.

We see cattle too; not the dairy herds of home, but sparse, scattered animals browsing among the bushes. White-faced Herefords gaze at us, Junoesque. Black Angus ignore us. What are English and Scottish cattle doing in this scorching country? Sometimes we see Brahmans, pallid and almond-eyed, hump-backed—we have seen them from time to time throughout the south, in fact—and they look more natural.

At Marathon we turn south, toward Big Bend National Park, eighty miles to go. The sun is ahead, immense and orange, a perfection of flaming sun, the universal creative/destructive principle embodied in a single instrument, like Kafka's penal machine. Our faces stretch taut, behind sunglasses our eyelids burn. We are Nordic, pale, the snow folk, used to living by our own internal fires; and this burning from without seems strange to us, strange and painful and rather wonderful. And I am pleased, like a child, to recognize things I learned in my reading —an ocotillo waving tentacular arms, a Gila woodpecker flashing across the brush. We are climbing now, the air turns suddenly cooler, the sun, a livid octopus, sprawls on the horizon. We are hurrying. Where will we camp tonight? Will it be crowded, will we find a place? The Bo is peevish, tired and hot, and so are we. We pass the boundary of the park, but still have forty miles to go; this is a huge park, hundreds of square miles of desert. Ahead we see mountains, dim at first, then rising higher and blacker out of the earth, jagged, palisaded, gothic mountains: the Chisos Mountains, a name remembered from my reading. We climb steeply. At last, after dark, we come to park headquarters, a brick building with a lighted lobby behind glass doors. But no

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one is there; the staff has gone. We inspect a map on the wall. A young couple come in, dressed in hiking clothes. "Have you just arrived?"

We nod, dead beat.

"Well, there are two campgrounds. This one up in the mountains"—they point to the map—"is full, but this other, down here, Boquillas Campground, near the river—maybe some places are left there."

"How far is it?"

"Twenty-five miles."

God!

Nevertheless our drive through the night to Boquillas is pleasant. Cool and dark. We are astonished at the suddenness of the nighttime chill. Small animals dart across our headlights. The Bo is asleep. We relax, glad to be together, quiet—driving in the night. But when we reach the campground it is pandemonium. Thousands of people, the great Easter cook-out. Where do they come from? El Paso is 300 miles away, Del Rio nearly as far. We could find no place; round and round we drove, five miles an hour, up and down alleys of trailers and campers. Finally we took whatever opening we could find, and pitched our tent between three or four others, the walls almost touching. We crept in, drew the flap, heated a can of beans. We were completely bushed, drenched in fatigue. We sprawled in our confusion of sleeping bags, mattresses, blankets, suitcases, cooking gear. Then something the Bo said, in his child's rage, offended me so deeply, in mine, that I got up and walked out, not even taking a flashlight. What cretinism. In two minutes I was hopelessly lost, in half an hour I was in the depth of contrition and despair. For two hours I walked and walked, past thousands of tents and trailers, or so it seemed, past groups of singers, dancers, card-players, their Coleman lanterns dazzling my eyes. Christ, what aching—thighs and hip-joints cracking with pain, mile after mile. No idea where the tent was. No idea how I could even ask where it might be. Dozens of times I saw it, off there among others, and picked my way toward it, stumbling over ropes and pegs; and then it wasn't ours at all. Finally by sheerest luck I found it. RM was waiting, sympathetic. What a wife. Anyone else would have laughed. Or jeered. We wiggled into our sleeping bag, and slowly my weariness drained into the earth.

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Diary, 11th Apr., Big Bend, Tex.: "At RM's suggestion I went out alone yesterday, toward the end of afternoon, to see what, if anything, I could see, without the distraction of the Bo. I went armed with bird guides and binoculars, and with a strong sense of myself as Silent Observer, Amateur Naturalist, Old Papa Audubon himself. The upshot: I saw nothing, not a goddamned thing. And when I returned to the tent, I found RM and the Bo had spent an hour playing with a roadrunner, which had appeared just after I left. I have yet to see one. Serves me right, no doubt.

"I drove toward headquarters, turning off on a side trail to a well, where water is taken from deep underground. There was no surface moisture, but vegetation was taller and greener than elsewhere. A likely spot, I thought. But I saw only doves, both mourning and white-winged, the commonest birds in this desert —their hooting and cooing can be heard all day—and my waiting was in vain. After an hour I began working down toward the campground, turning off here and there on other side trails, scanning the desert until my eyes burned. I saw nothing.

"Not that I hoped for a jaguar, though they are seen here occasionally, very occasionally, and I'd give a good deal to be so lucky. But jack rabbits, javelinas, kit foxes, gray foxes, badgers, ground squirrels, rats—they're all supposed to be common. By the time I reached our tent, well after dark, I'd have been enchanted with a rattlesnake. But I saw nothing.

"Not true, actually. I saw the desert. In one of its 'moods.' It was the end of a blistering day, and the entire desert, the immense basin between mountain ranges, was burnt, scorched, crackling-dry. I had the sense of losing myself; a comfortable enough sense, since the SAAB was nearby, ready to carry me back; yet there in the mesquite, which grew to eye-level or higher, I was cut off, it seemed, the one spark of self-consciousness in a mindless sea. Far away, on either side, were mountains: jagged, many-colored barriers. Overhead, the flaring sky. Except for the doves and an occasional lizard rattling across the stony earth, I heard only stillness, a stillness that *could* be heard, so immense that it sang; a vibrant stillness. Oh, the desert is alive

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all right. From the car it may look empty, but out in the mesquite I felt life all around me, everywhere, mindless primeval eyes staring at me.

"The sun, a fire-ball, flamed behind a crag of the Chisos Mountains to the west, and then, rather abruptly, sank from sight. Shadow surged across the desert. Immediate relief: the fire had been taken away from my skin. My eyes, aching from the day-long squint, opened and relaxed. For a moment the stillness no longer sang; it was as if the loss of the sun had produced a shock in the desert, a moment of dead silence. Then the singing began again. I have no idea what it was. There was no sound I could distinguish, no sound I could *hear*. Only stillness. But stillness is not silence, any more than a bated breath is an extinct breath. Never during my prowling here and there did I lose this sense of the still song.

"It is a song of joy for the sun, joy for the creative/destructive principle. The desert, burning to death, thirsting to death, sings it eternally. I, the intruder, could not sing it, but could only listen in fascinated horror.

"Long after the sun had set, the sky flared and changed overhead.

"I drove back toward camp, but before reaching it I turned off on still another side trail that wound among rising hills at the foot of the eastern mountains, until I passed up again into sunlight, on top of a knoll strewn with rock-rubble. I got out, and squinted back across the miles and miles of low, flat desert. I imagined I was a man of a hundred years ago, standing there with my burro, my goatskin canteen, my little pack. My clothes were sweatstained, my felt hat heavy and greasy. My skeleton inside my flesh was like an armature of pain upon which my senses loosely coiled. All this was possible and in fact not difficult at all; but the rest was harder. For then I tried to think how I could, by a deliberate act of will, step out with my little burro to cross that burning distance. It would be absurd, the act of a flagellant but far more dangerous. Yet I knew many men had done it. For a long time I stood listening to the still song, staring into the vastness. Then I understood. One could step out, not only deliberately, but joyfully; out into the burning pain and danger. Not to cross it, not to reach the other mountains; but to be in it. Or just to be."

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Our drive to Sierra Blanca (in New Mexico) took us through an Apache reservation at Mescalero. What does the name signify —that everyone there was living on mescal beans? They looked it. So far all our views of Indian life had been more than depressing, they had been horrifying. Mescalero deepened the horror. High on a hill stood a large church—I forget what denomination—a sturdy, almost elegant church, while down below, and elsewhere throughout the reservation, sprawled the shacks of the Indians. Squalor, unrelieved poverty. We never saw huts so miserable in the black regions of the south. Naked children, I mean completely naked youngsters of eight or ten such as you might expect to see in Togo or Calcutta, sat in the dirt, shivering, and scowled at us. The men looked at us, not with unfriendly faces, but with angry faces; they were perpetually enraged. We wanted a post office, and hence drove into the village, off the main route, where we found it, a fine white administration building with Old Glory fluttering overhead. But I swear if I were an Apache living in Mescalero I'd tear that cloth down every night and stuff it in the privy. Not that one need be "soft" on Indians, or think that all the injustice of the Indian wars was committed by whites. What has justice to do with the grand movements of history? The fact remains that right now, today, those people are living in filth when they could be living in cleanliness; they are living in hovels patched together with used tarpaper, flattened tin cans, and barbed wire when they could be decently sheltered. And the further fact remains that this is in *our* country, not Togo or Calcutta, and that we, we affluent and ingenious Americans, we "decision-makers" and "problem-solvers," masters of everything,—we possess the knowledge, the means, and the power to do something about it, and we have *not* done it. What could be simpler? No consideration of the sociologists or ethnographers or whatever they call themselves can override the ordinary desiderata that kids be clothed and men be sheltered. Give the kid a shirt, I say. Give the man a house. And if he defiles it or burns it down in a drunken rage, *then give him another one.*

Certain things are inadmissible.

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The rest of that day, April 22nd, was, like so many, a time of ups and downs, beauty and ugliness, delight and misery; and it ended, again like so many, in a kind of total catastrophe that for the time being destroyed us utterly. We left Chiricahua and drove to Willcox (in Arizona), skirting an immense white dry lake, in midmorning; another flat, bright-colored, dusty town. First we cashed a check and looked up a doctor. I had my shots (of allergy serums which we carried with us), one in each arm, with no immediate local reaction, but with a slower, more general reaction that lasted the rest of the day: I felt sick, enfeebled and wobbly, as if convalescing from fever. I had experienced this often enough before, so wasn't worried by it. We did some shopping. RM insisted I buy a heavy sweatshirt with a hood, for sleeping on cold nights. While we walked along the sidewalk, we encountered a couple of young Apaches, staggering drunk in spite of the hour, their shirts torn, their faces scratched. They were handsome boys, with long glossy hair and bronzed, bony faces; looking exactly like photographs of Geronimo. Are Apaches a purer strain, generally speaking, than other Indians? Certainly the ones we saw, here and elsewhere, were pure Indian, fierce and proud, with no trace of white adulteration. These two frightened RM a little, in fact, but although the looks they gave us were sullen, they offered no harm.

RM reminded me that whereas in America the common word for a destructive youth is *vandal,* in Germany it is *apache.* Mutual semantic xenophobia.

We hunted up a laundromat, a large building on a far corner of town, surrounded by a dusty parking lot: sunlight blazed on the whitewashed walls. We had been visiting laundromats all along, of course, every three or four days; but the one in Willcox was the first we really used, I mean for all it was worth. We moved in. Long aisles of gleaming machines; pop and coffee dispensers; comfortable chairs, ash trays, magazines, TV; wash tubs in a corner. We sat in the chairs and ate our lunch while the laundry tumbled, and afterward RM washed her hair at one of the tubs; finally she stripped the Bo and stuck him in the tub too, for a proper bath. Meanwhile I took off my shoes and smoked a

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cigar. I have no idea what the people thought, but no one objected.

Finally we headed on. The drive to the Saguaro Monument, outside Tucson, took about two hours, through rolling desert country with mountains always in view and with the plants we had grown accustomed to: mesquite, creosote bush, yucca, prickly pear. But mostly I remember my sense of anticipation and impatience. "Where the hell are the saguaros?" Again I was fooled by the southwest's abrupt transitions. Where I had expected to see saguaros growing scattered and singly, then more thickly, as we approached their habitat, actually it wasn't until we reached the saguaro desert itself that we saw any wild ones at all, and then we saw thousands, thousands. It was exciting. In fact this was what I had wanted to see more than anything, the one point of our itinerary that I had considered indispensable. As we drove into the monument, I felt distinctly that this, this moment, was what I had driven 7,000 miles to reach; and I was not disappointed.

We went briefly to headquarters, then out into the desert, on a long circular route around a basin between the Santa Barbara and Rincon mountains. The late afternoon sunlight was hazy and rosecolored, slanting across the saguaro forest. And that's what it was, a forest, thick and with the particular self-assured thereness which we associate with a community of trees. It was lovely, very beautiful. First, it was green. We had been told at headquarters that the winter rains around Tucson had been heavier than usual, and the result was evident: the cactus far plumper and greener than any we had seen before. Second, so many plants were in bloom: wildflowers, hundreds of species, we knew only a few by name; ironwood with its purple clusters against dark leaves; palo verde trees shimmering in yellow blossoms; a few strawberry and barrel cacti with delicate bright-red flowers. Then third, the saguaros. As RM said, when she had seen them in the cactus houses of botanical gardens in Germany, they had seemed uninteresting to her; at best, grotesque. But here in their natural habitat they were—well, not beautiful exactly, huge unornamented hulks that they were, but so alive, at home, and natural, not at all grotesque. In an instant we lost all sense of the great cactus as a curiosity. We drove slowly, stopping often, along the self-guiding tour, and

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this time we read every word of the leaflet. We got out and walked along nature trails, learning new species: staghorn cholla, buckthorn, catsclaw. On the rises we paused to look out across the desert—stately saguaros, shimmering palo verdes, fiery-tipped ocotillos. We looked at many birds, including the Gambel's quail, plump birds resembling our partridges at home, except that the desert partridges have a long, forward-leaning plume, like the plume on a shako. En masse, the saguaros seemed just the right "trees" for that softly intense, rose-colored desert, exactly the trees we would have invented for it if we had had enough imagination. Individually the saguaro, though unornamented, is not ungraceful; quite the contrary. The lines are not straight, not severe, but curved slightly, making a tall classically proportioned shaft, like the columns of the Parthenon, and the arms, often anyway, branch at just the proper heights and angles to produce a sturdy asymmetrical effect. Each cactus, in that late afternoon sun, cast a long shadow, arms upraised, across the rosy sand. Were they trees? Cenotaphs? Figures in a silent, tragic chorus? No. They were nothing we had ever seen before.

We wandered till sundown, till after sundown. Then: sudden panic. We zoomed away, heading for a little county park, to which we had seen a sign pointing on our way in. We came to the turn-off and found ourselves on a red, winding, back-country road that twisted deeper and deeper into darkening wilderness. It looked like a road seldom traveled, and at the forks there were no signs to point the way. Queerly twisted trees writhed in clumps; it was an unreal world, desolate, unpeopled. My head fuzzy from my shots. The Bo was overheated, and so were we. When we came, in blind luck, to the camp, it was miserable. We sat looking in the fading light: wild vines, squirmy trees, broken picnic tables, a leaning outhouse with the door unhinged. No one in sight—for a thousand miles, it seemed. High grass. Real scorpion country. At last, disheartened, we began to make camp. I gathered sticks for a fire, I don't know what—some desert shrub—but all I got for my effort was smoke and a filthy, oily smell; very little fire. Nevertheless RM began to cook supper, a casserole of rice, spam, pineapple, and green peppers, of which we are all fond. I pointed the car toward us, turned on the headlights, and began setting up the tent. In despair now; scorpions be damned. I knew in my heart the night was collaps-

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ing. There was a loud scuffling in the bush, beyond the headlights. Bats swooped overhead. I flung the tent on the ground, unrolled it, placed a stake through a loop, and began to pound with my rubber mallet. No good. I probed the earth—here, there—looking for a soft spot; it was all impenetrable, hard as asphalt. In fury I hammered the stake. Chunks of rubber flew; then the whole mallet came apart. I hurled the remnants into the darkness, cursing wildly, prancing—sick from my shots. The Bo whimpered, his lip trembled. "Papa, papa, what is it?" He thought I was about to storm off into the night again, as I had at Big Bend. This brought me to my senses. I consoled him, took him on my lap. "Don't worry, Bo, we'll be o.k." I looked at RM. "Let's go," I said, and gratefully she agreed.

Quivering with haste, we jammed the tent any whichway into the car, the pots, the pans, the Bo; RM sat with her half-cooked casserole wrapped in a blanket on her lap; and we drove away. Far around in the darkness on back roads, a great circle, fifty miles, searching for signs, and at last back into the south side of Tucson, where we found a motel, not good and not cheap either; the first we came to. But it seemed a rare haven in the circumstances. At last, after ten o'clock, we unpacked our bags, RM set up her stove and finished cooking the casserole [we carried a camp stove but used it only in emergencies], and we sat on the floor together to eat our supper, exhausted, bleary, feverish, sunscorched, but tranquil again and filled with returning visions of the desert's beauty. While RM cleaned up and the Bo slept, I wrote in the diary; nothing quotable, except perhaps these concluding words: "After despair, hope again. It seems strange. Believing in neither, we nevertheless swing continually between them, the poles of desire. In our human-ness. Why can't we *be* what we believe? We are dead beat, yet already thinking of tomorrow. We'll find a good camp *first,* we say, and then we'll inspect the desert at leisure. But why didn't we do that today? Why don't we learn from our mistakes? Human-ness again. Should we be grateful for it? . . .

"We're running out of money. It distresses me more than I can say, though money worries have plagued me all my life. This seems worse. I have the feeling we *must* do this trip, do it all and do it right—we'll never have another chance. But that isn't the whole reason either. I have a compulsion now, an obsession.

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This trip must be finished simply because it must. Because it exists. It has its own momentum now, its own teleology. Well, the main point tonight is that we ended in disaster, the worst so far: total defeat, a complete rout. There can be no question of that, we fled in disorder, never so eager to get out of anywhere—that malign, direful campground! And yet already, in this motel and in my fever and weariness, even our defeat seems delicious."

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The desert heat was good for us in many ways, baking away our aches and pains, our New-Englandish neuralgias and rheumatisms, but above all it charged us with sexuality. Unmistakably. We performed wonders. We noticed it first at Big Bend, and thereafter we grew only stronger. Papa Soleil, Princeps. In the desert we lived the lives of animals, of our animal bodies, without thought or work, at least in comparison with life at home; in the sun, by the sun, of the sun, and in a sense for the sun. We were lazy, strong, sinewy, laconic, bold, supple, amiable. We cared for nothing. We never knew our hearts were beating. Heat—we baked in it, basked in it. In Italy poor people say a day in the sun is as good as half a meal, and we knew what they meant. We ate the heat, the way rocks do. We made love. I mean we made it; it emanated from us and enveloped us. We were like oaks that create their own ambience of leaves. Many springtimes had gone, and many, we hoped, would come, but this was the best spring, for what compares with the flowering of mature plants? In our vegetable souls we luxuriated, praising the sun, pleasuring ourselves. We gloated and we were satisfied.

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Diary, 6th May, Oraibi, Ariz.: "We have learned so much [during several days in Oraibi, where we pitched our tent on the property of two Hopi brothers] that I can't hope to put it all down, much less to organize it intelligently. The first thing is to exclude systematically everything about Hopi history, culture, religion, etc., assuming it is all in the textbooks; but this is a pity.

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Because we are interested in these people as contemporaries, rather than as relics of a primitive society, and because we come without scholarly auspices, we have been told things that the scholars may never learn; and certainly we have been given an impression of Hopi vitality that seldom gets into academic writing. Then, too, the textbooks are suspect, according to the Hopis, who complain bitterly about errors and exaggerations. Many researches have been conducted in this area, no doubt because it offers such a neat lay-out: the area is small and the tribe compact. I was surprised to learn there are hardly more than 5,000 Hopis altogether; their fame exceeds their number. When we first showed up, I was asked by E. [one of the brothers] if I was working on my doctoral dissertation, and there was a visible relaxing when I said I wasn't. A standing joke concerns the Hopi who, upon being asked the members of his household, replies: 'The grandparents, the parents, the children, and the anthropologist. . . .'

"Today we visited six or eight Hopi villages strung like a necklace across the three mesas. In Old Oraibi we saw the ancient mounds, broken walls, and grounds littered with potsherds that mark the oldest Hopi settlement in this region. It is said, for that matter, to be the oldest continuously inhabited place in the U. S. and no wonder the archaeologists itch to get in there; but so far the Hopis have denied all requests to excavate. I don't blame them. It is their village, and in the newer parts of it, up to two or three hundred years old, they are still living, close to the sacred sites of their ancestors. We ourselves asked permission to enter at the first house in the village. The woman who came out was friendly enough. 'Go ahead,' she said. 'But no pictures!' Actually there wasn't much to see. The interesting things are buried under the soil, no doubt, the soil that gathers so quickly in this windy, eroded country. We picked up a few shards that look old and have painted designs on them, enough to satisfy our meager archaeological instincts. For all we know they come from pots that were made last year.

"But the village that took our fancy was Walpi; very old too, about twenty miles east of Oraibi. It is situated on the edge of a rocky mesa; we drove up a narrow, spiral track on the cliff-face. Once up, we discovered the village in two parts, the older part

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on the very tip of the mesa, separated from the rest by a narrow neck of rock—an ideal fortress. Most of the houses in the old section were tumbled down, and only a few people live there. When we first arrived—in the newer section—we met two workmen putting the finishing touches on a big steel water tank, which was set on a pylon bolted to bare rock. The men were spreading concrete beneath it, very meticulously. One of them explained that they had to be sure to fill up all the cracks in the rock, for if water got in it could freeze in winter and split off a chunk of the mesa, taking not only the water tower but parts of Walpi with it. 'Hopis always fill up the cracks,' he said. He was talkative and friendly, and so was the old woman who called us into her house to sell us a pot. We ended by buying a large, crude, but nicely proportioned cup, made from orange-colored, unglazed clay. The woman showed us all her house, at her own initiative—we made it a point not to pry. The house comprised two small square rooms. In one were two iron bedsteads, the other had cupboards and a table and a gas burner. On the walls were many photographs, in gaudy metal frames, of her sons and grandsons, mostly in uniform and decorated with little flags. No water in the house, and plumbing is unknown in Walpi, at least so far. We were interested in the stone ovens we saw around the edge of the village, and we asked about Hopi bread; we would have liked to buy some. But the woman told us the ovens are used only for baking ceremonial bread, and that for ordinary purposes Hopis eat fried bread, baked in a skillet on top of a fire; and she showed us a round loaf the size of frying pan. Her house, I'm afraid, stank in our nostrils, but was tidy and as clean as a house could be in that wind-swept village; the stink was the stink of time. Before we left the old woman wrote her name painstakingly in my pocket notebook.

"In all, fifty or more houses were crammed on the mesa-top, some perched on the brink, others set in rows. The stonework and brickwork conform so closely to the contours of the mesa itself that the houses, especially the older ones, seemed to have grown from the rock. Here and there we saw entrances to underground chambers, the kivas, where religious rites are conducted. And of course we saw many ladders, the kind one associates

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with pueblo-dwellers, with side-rails of uneven lengths at the top. We met a man in the older section who was cutting up scraps of wood with an axe, working not five feet from the drop-off. He told us he had just returned from California, where he had visited his son in the army. Did he like it out there? 'Oh, yeah, yeah—but I'm glad to be back. I can breathe better here.' We asked about the children—the village was full of them, and of dogs, cats, and chickens—about what precautions are taken to guard them from falling over the edge; we ourselves were anxious about the Bo, and my own acrophobia was strong. 'Oh, nothing,' he said. 'Sometimes one falls off. It don't hurt them none.' Was he serious? We didn't know. But in some places the drop from the edge of the village—wall-less and rail-less—was straight down for several hundred feet. Later I asked E. what would happen to a Hopi who developed acrophobia. But the idea was so outlandish that he couldn't answer and shrugged it off.

"Most of our talk with W. and E. has concerned the present condition of the Hopis and what can be done about it. Never in my life have I met two such *responsible* men; they practically exude dedication. They are determined to create, from materials at hand, a strong, integrated, prosperous Hopi nation. Their silver business is more trouble than the profit justifies, but they keep it going anyway because, aside from its exemplary value, it supports eight Hopi families, including thirty-four children—and it is not a dole, not a work program. On the contrary, it is entirely owned and managed by Hopis, and it employs men who would otherwise be unemployable at this level, since they are unschooled. Here they are performing at a high level indeed, I think, especially the silversmiths, whose work is the best I've seen. Thus the men are trained while at the same time the craft is kept alive; yet the shop is a small part of the brothers' contribution to tribal life. Not a day passes, I imagine, in which they aren't helping somebody build a new house or improve an old one, running errands for people who have no cars, contributing somehow to the purification of ceremonial life, wrangling over politics, arguing with federal authorities, etc. Often they are impeded by conservative elements in the tribe. They complain, naturally, but like all born leaders they are obsessed with their

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own vision of the future and convinced that it will prevail. Hence, although they are earnest, intelligent talkers in their own cause, they are not particularly argumentative among their own people, but are more inclined to patience and good humor in carrying through their plans; persistence, they say, is the chief Hopi virtue. And they are strong family men. Last night two children in their family, which means everyone on their mother's side, were found playing with a small rattlesnake. They were bitten, and the whole family—dozens of people—dropped everything until the kids were cared for and their fate, not critical, was known.

"Of course we have heard a lot more about the Hopi's difficulties than I can remember or set down. Many problems are fundamentally legalistic. Their relationship with Phoenix, for example. The Hopis claim they are not part of the state of Arizona, because they are occupying land held by their ancestors before white men came to this region, and are occupying it by agreement with the federal government. This leads to conflict with the state over matters of taxation, law enforcement, etc. I gather that in the past the Hopis have been browbeaten by Phoenix, but that recently they have begun to hold their own. More power to them. Yet some of their predicaments, springing from their generally anomalous position in American society, seem virtually insoluble. If they wish to charter a corporation, thus to obtain the legal and economic advantages of corporate ownership, they are obliged to do so under the laws of Arizona, or perhaps of some other state; but this would constitute a tacit acknowledgement of the state's authority, laying them open to the state's taxing and regulatory powers. For reasons of principle, they can't permit it.

"What will become of them? I don't know, I don't suppose anyone does. Actually the most difficult part of their future, the real imponderable, must lie not here but outside: the Hopis' connection with the rest of us. They themselves continually use the word 'independence,' but when I ask what they mean by it they aren't sure. They do not mean it politically, at any rate. Politics in our sense is still foreign to tribal mentality. What they want is economic independence, self-sufficiency, and they believe if they can get this then somehow the rest will follow. All their effort goes toward material construction and technical educa-

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tion on one hand, and toward restoring the tribe's religious purity on the other. When I suggest that a conflict may develop between these two objectives, they disagree. When I suggest that material progress must be matched by cultural progress if they are to avoid enfeebling the integrative factors of their civilization, they reply that they are too deeply immersed in practical affairs to think about such problems. When I point out how too rapid material advancement in other countries has sometimes entailed the break-up of tradition, with resulting cultural displacement, moral confusion, and general alienation —thinking of Asia and Africa—they fall back on their faith in the Hopi way of life, which to them seems incorruptible.

"But I don't want to leave the impression that W. and E. are merely latter-day Hopi technocrats; far from it. They are men of natural sensibility, which has been strengthened by their upbringing and by their long period outside the reservation. They are devoted to the ethico-mythical ritualism of their civilization, and dedicated to restoring its ancient purity. Does this mean doing away with peyote? I didn't ask. They dance in the Kochina dances, wearing the fantastic masks and costumes that everyone has seen in photographs, and they regularly take part in the ceremonies of the kiva. To them this is the center of Hopi life, even today; it is what holds, and will hold, the tribe together. But they have no concept of a cultural mechanism or of a developing cultural process, such as is forever prominent in the minds of people who work in the centers of cultural activity. For them cultural life is something fixed, and the dynamism of it escapes them. I think they are dead wrong, of course. To my mind a fixed culture is already an atrophied culture, and I suspect their dream of a prosperous *and* culturally unified Hopi nation is vain. But I have had little success in explaining my point of view—not that I've tried to throw cold water on them —because they do not understand my terms. It is a clear failure of communication.

"I came here with certain problems of my own in mind, but have ended by spending all my time so far in discussions of the Hopis' problems; which in itself is a measure of the intensity of life in Oraibi. Even so, I have learned what I need to know, viz. that tribal life offers nothing to the rest of us, nothing at all.

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Exactly what this tribal life is today remains somewhat unclear, because old ways are changing and the tribe is in a state of flux. But what it was once, at its former best, seems clear: it was an intensely communal, not to say communistic, society which struck a rough but workable balance among the forces of individualism and collectivity. But—and this is what cannot be evaded—it was a religious society, i.e. a medieval society. More and more I am impressed by the gothic elements in Hopi attitudes. Faith and ceremony are what bound the tribe together, controlling every action and utterance, whether public or private. The pueblo is the American Chartres. As far as I can see, its example now, in spite of its fascination, has little use in a post-Renaissance world, and no doubt that is what I should have known in the first place.

"In the rest of North America we have no binding faith that is not chauvinistic, and there is no point in pretending otherwise.

"I don't know how far the analogy between a Hopi community and a medieval parish can be pushed. Socially speaking, I'd say pretty far. The big difference is in the two religions themselves. Whatever else medieval Catholicism may have been, it was official, public, expansionist, and above-ground. The Hopi religion is just the opposite—an underground activity, a mystery cult. Most of the ceremony is conducted literally underground. Outsiders are excluded, and there is no proselytizing, none whatever. Consequently, whereas faith in the Catholic world could, and did, support an enormous cultural adjunct, an entire edifice of poetry, painting, architecture, song, drama, etc., faith among the Hopis cannot tolerate any above-ground depiction of their devotional life. This is an exaggeration, since much Hopi artwork, the silverware and pottery, is in fact decorated with rudimentary, stylized ornamentation derived from the rituals of the kiva; but it is extremely rudimentary and no effort is being made to develop it—even E.'s designs, although graphically strong, do nothing to augment the substance of the conventional stereotypes. As far as I know, the highest art of the Hopis is a concealment, the Kochina mask. And I should say that the only direction in which this underground art can develop is toward more concealment, like the deliberate ambiguities of Catharist literature

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in Europe. But without a poetic tradition and in an anti-mythological age, anything like this seems out of the question.

"E. calls the Hopi reservation the 'new frontier,' and that is the spirit one finds here. So much to be done, so many illnesses to cure—ugliness, filth, disease, indigence, the torpor of the people themselves—and such a will to get on, at least among people like W. and E. They are excited people, elated and enthusiastic people, such as I haven't seen for years. Nothing in Oraibi is like the decadence of New England—industries perishing, farms grinding down to the last spindly cow and the last weedy pasture. This is a new country rising from the ruins of a very old one. My doubts about ultimate success may or may not be justifiable, but for the present, and probably for decades to come, this will be a stirring place to live. . . ."

Later: "Still fearful I may leave the wrong impression. I asked E. this evening what he needed here, what I could send from outside—thinking of books, or even that I might conduct a little fund-raising campaign among friends to supply some needed equipment for the village. God knows, there are many deficiencies. I haven't seen a single toy, for example, much less the sort of playground equipment that is standard elsewhere. But E. answered: 'Nothing material, just understanding—that's what we need most. Of what our young people are doing.' He went on to deplore the 'professional Indians' who go outside and stir up the public about changes E. and his friends are making, while at the same time blaming the Bureau of Indian Affairs for 'destroying the old way of life.' And he deplored equally the people who come here from the outside, those he calls 'Indian lovers,' and go away disappointed if they don't find the Indians wearing feathers and trading with wampum. He and the other educated young Hopis are trying to bring back to the reservation the best of what they have learned outside, while preserving the best of what was already here. It is a new amalgam, requiring many changes. And if an ancient Hopi dwelling is renovated to make it more habitable for the living, and if in the process an important relic of the past is destroyed—well, what of it? E. shrugged, and instantly, with more understanding than I had before, I thought of Colonel Nasser flooding the temples of the upper Nile in order to build his big dam. The present is more important than

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the past, the living are more important than the dead. And the BIA, which the Indians with good reason hate more than anything in this world, nevertheless appears to be in general sympathy with these views.

"E. did not ask me to write his case for the world. He would not ask anyone to do anything. But he intimated that if I should be inclined to write something about the Hopis, perhaps I could correct a few popular misconceptions. I wish I could. What E. needs, however, is not a wandering, indecisive poet, but an intelligent journalist. All I can say is that I am with him. Unlike the 'Indian lovers,' I have no fear that he will do too much, but only that he will do too little, that his aims are too narrow. I would ask him, humbly and from my great remoteness, only to bring some of the purity he finds in the kiva to the world above ground, to sing a little, paint a little, to forget his white customers for a moment and give the Hopis a piece of their own silver, big enough and beautiful enough for all the world to see."

*

. . . Our visit to the satellite factory came on our last morning with the Parks, while we were actually on our way out. (17th May. Robert A. Park, an old friend with whom we visited in Los Angeles, had become an aerospace systems designer, after several false starts as a writer, teacher, musician, and lawyer. He is called Andy by his friends.) Alas, just then the Bo developed a nosebleed, a bad one, and RM had to stay with him in the parking lot; she would have enjoyed the tour. I set off by myself among the complex of glass boxes occupying a square block of Redondo Beach. At the entrance to Andy's box I was stopped by a security guard. While I waited, dozens of space workers passed. They couldn't have been more uniform if they had been Marines. Close-cropped hair, white short-sleeved shirts, sedate ties, dark trousers, black shoes. I felt brash. My jeans, pseudo-leather jacket, beard, mildewed yachting cap,—I don't suppose I looked like a suspicious character, I couldn't if I tried, but I was as out of place as a Mussulman at high mass. Finally Andy rescued me and led me away. Again I had an impression that movies and TV have recorded our civilization more faithfully

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than most people imagine. Here it was: fantastic machines, blackboards scribbled with algebraic graffiti, lean intense high-domed men strolling the corridors in twos and threes, conversing earnestly. At one point Andy got on the phone to Chicago and I listened: it was incomprehensible. I could understand the sounds—"variable apogee," "fixed perigee," "ratio of absorption," etc.—but I couldn't interpret them. In the work areas we inspected capsules in various stages of assembly and disassembly, immensely complicated things as I could tell at a glance, yet compact and cleanlooking too: gleaming wires, copper connections, valves, grids, generators, etc.—I was reminded of what you see when you look under the bonnet of a Maserati. And some of the talk had the quality of garage talk too, which was gratifying. Once we came to a group of men standing around the instrument panel of a big compression chamber; one of the satellites, inside the chamber, had shown a "leak" on the first test some days earlier, but on all successive tests—five or six, with a new one in progress—the leak had failed to appear, with the result that the men didn't know whether there was really a leak or not; or rather, since in the circumstances—the machine is worth a quarter of a *billion* dollars—they had to assume the worst, they just couldn't find it. "Goddamn it," one guy said, "it won't show up." "So," said Andy, "that's good, that's what you want." "Yeah, it'd show up out there, you can bet on that," the guy muttered, nodding toward Uranus. They might have been two mechanics at the local garage faced with a fading hydraulic line.

Organization. The place reeked and glittered with organization. And intelligence, brain-power; I was impressed, not to say oppressed, by the sheer presence of it, I could practically peel it off the walls. The physicists and engineers were dressed alike, they talked alike, they almost had the same noses. There were plenty of girls around, clerks and stenographers, most of them staggeringly sexy, but no one paid them any attention: they were the harem, the window-dressing, playthings of idle moments. The place seemed Saracenic, Byzantine. The same organizational strictness and religious fervor; the same ceremonial ecstasy. One couldn't doubt it, these men were phenomenally happy. Here individualism and collectivity coincided; a perfect adjust-

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ment. The men were communalized intellectually, i.e. by their simple reliance upon one another in their immensely specialized work and by their commitment to the same goal. But their individual spirit of adventure, on the space frontier, must have been strong too, and indeed I could sense it in their voices, Andy's more than anyone's. Perhaps it isn't surprising after all that Andy should have made his extraordinary transition, from a poet trying his damnedest to upset reality in surrealistic rebellion, to the model of a space scientist. His life is surreal still, but organized. As he said, he really knows, now, what he is doing, he knows it cold because it is all in the manuals; and what isn't in the manuals is testable, scientifically analysable, and hence he can tell with certainty whether or not his imagination is on the right track. No guessing, no groping. The sense of relief in his voice was evident. No wonder he was exuberant. Who wouldn't be, to throw off the incertitudes of art yet retain the freedom of creativity? And Andy did his best to entice me into it (to begin as a technical writer, then work gradually into design, which is the route he followed). Wild offers were made; starting at $20,000, etc. For a poet? A Vermont hillbilly? That's indecent. I stood there, gaping. And I couldn't imagine working in that sterile, pristine, denatured environment. Yet I know I was reacting naively. If those capsules are the height of human technology, nevertheless the men who made them were close to the heart of natural existence. I have always felt that no "naturalist," not Aristotle, not Thoreau, has ever "seen" nature as clearly as those who work among the stars, playing with the vectors of celestial force. The few men, few even among astrophysicists and engineers, who can genuinely express their love of the objective universe in a mathematical formula possess, it seems to me, the purest love of all. . . .

The social point of the satellite factory is its place in the milieu. Los Angeles impressed us very badly. We can't disguise it. Fake, fake, fake—it drips off the hills and dribbles on the beach like the spillage at a far-gone cocktail party. Jesus, what mess! Immense accumulation of expensive trash. Houses jammed up like shacks in Hooverville; yet they are rich men's shacks, not one worth less than $50,000. Miles and miles of this. The worried rich. Disorder everywhere, and ugliness, unabated ugli-

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ness. And we saw nothing of the poor sections of town, the ghetto! I had the feeling that this exterior mirrors the inner life of the place exactly. Only the psychiatrists thrive there, thousands of them. Which came first, the inner or outer madness? The psychiatrists would say inner madness comes first, but I'm not so sure. If I lived in that insane jumble, I'd break down, I'm certain of it. Andy lives the only reasonable life possible in such an environment, and he does it by shutting himself away in the satellite factory; I don't say rational, I don't say sane—the satellite factory is a phantasmagoria—but at least it's reasonable. Life in our world can be happy only in the scattered, tiny oases of reasonable fantasy that exist here and there, and this is more evident in Los Angeles, in the entire complex of southern California, than anywhere else I know. The satellite factory is one such oasis, and one that I had not considered before; hence I ran into it unexpectedly.

The further point is that life in a collectivity *is* possible, given the right collectivity. Every man's dream: the city of God. To be an angel in the communion of angels. Most of us never experience it once we leave kindergarten. But the satellite factory is such a city, or at least it appears to be. The trouble is that its occurrence is unpredictable; it is a social fortuity, something that took form adventitiously in the larger social tumult; an eddy, a momentary phenomenon; and in a few years it will be gone, for already it shows signs of organizational hypertrophy and the "managers" and "bureaucrats" are moving in. Even now it is a haven for only a few especially gifted men. We cannot predict the occurrence of such social oases, because they arise out of technological and cultural events that escape sociological analysis, and even if we could I see no way in which the satellite factory could serve as a model for other, more generalized collectivities, in which the rest of us might find a place.

Meanwhile Andy's satellite factory is linked to others, and to similar organizations throughout the country, in a happy society of specialists existing on the surface of the larger misery, a world of fantasists held together by its own teleology. These men are not amoral fundamentally, of course; but they are so damned happy in their work that they become functionally apolitical, asocial, acultural. They just haven't the time to think

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about the rest of us or about what they may be doing to us. They cannot stop to consider, in the midst of their ecstasy, what is really meant by their own parasitic connection with the military structure, for example; and here I am thinking less of the immediate technological application of aerospace developments to weaponry (Andy's factory specializes in "far space probes" to Mars, Venus, etc.) than of the more gradual, though still rapid, transformation of American civilization from a liberal civilian republic to a reactionary military oligarchy. The concentration of power which we now see in high strata of the military-industrial bloc lays this country open to an authoritarian coup. Every thoughtful man knows this. Yet the one group of thoughtful men who might alter our course, the space scientists and engineers, are doing nothing. Think what these few men could achieve if they would organize and call a strike. They have more power today than Aristophanes' women had 2,500 years ago. Who doubts that they could write their own ticket for the benefit of us all, perhaps even ridding us of the generals, or the worst of them, forever, and setting us on the right track again? They have the power. But will they use it? Never—that's certain. They are too damned happy.

*

The next day was Sunday, a cold, drizzly morning. (29th May, after two weeks in the Sierras and along the coast.) We drove to San Francisco, and stopped at the edge of town while I shut myself in a phone booth with my address book; but it was no good. Again we paid for our planless itinerary. At every number the phone rang and rang, a dismal buzz in the rainy distance, and no one answered. The Memorial Day weekend had taken everyone out of town. I had no desire whatever to play the country boy in town to see the sights, and anyway we had no money. I wanted to see the life of the place, however briefly, but for that one needs friends, intermediaries. And now we had none.

We drove aimlessly, or walked, shivering, in Golden Gate Park, where we inspected a melancholy herd of buffalo. Finally we just sat in the car, parked by the curb on a residential street, listening to the rain on the roof and wondering what to do. The rain

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was steady and gray. We felt lonely and small, out of our element. And then the Bo, who for some weeks had been struggling with his first glimpse of personal death, took this moment to plunge to the very bottom of his fear. Why at this time—because of his experience in the desert, or because of the trip as a whole, the uprooting and uncertainty? Or had he simply reached this "stage of development"? No matter. He wailed, sobs of terror and despair—so pitiful. And what could we do? On principle we will not tell him lies. We consoled him as best we could, but it was a poor job, and poor for us too, because our hearts were wrung and his misery touched very near our own. "Papa, *why* do we have to die?" I clenched my teeth and held him. "Bo, Bo," I said. But I could hardly say anything more. Then across the street, behind the Bo's back, I saw a man beating his wife. A Volkswagen had drawn up at the opposite curb, driven by a heavy-set man with a black mustache, and as soon as the car stopped he began to punch his wife in the seat next to him. It was no game, he was serious. The little car cramped his style, but he let her have it, a half-dozen good blows with his fist before she—trim and small, well-dressed, a blue pillbox hat on her ringletted hair—could jump out. She stood there, shocked, not quite laughing, looking toward us. She reached into her purse and took out—I half expected a pistol—her key-ring, and marched up the steps of a stucco house behind a low barberry hedge. She let herself in. Meanwhile the man, craning and twisting to see through the rear window, meticulously backed his Volkswagen into a driveway that disappeared between the houses. We saw no more of him. Was this the "life" I was looking for in the city? It was life sure enough: the rain, our disappointment and alienation, the Bo's terror, the violence and pain of the people across the way. It all went together, and what could I say? That it is better, beloved Bo, never to have been born? Many brave men have said it, but how futile. And for me then, the one who had given the Bo his life and who loved that life more than anything—for me the futility was twice, thrice compounded.

Later, in the center of town, we walked on a broad, rising street, I don't remember its name. It looked like any city street. Mist blew at out backs. My beard was beaded with water. The shops

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were closed, traffic was slight, except in front of a big pastel-colored Roman Catholic church, where mass was just letting out. Suddenly, we spotted a blinking neon sign: NEW YORK HOUSE OF BAGELS. We whooped and ran. A tiny, hole-in-the-wall of a shop; but a good Jewish shop—open on Sunday morning. Inside the door stood a red-haired, ratty-looking man—his hair was a wig, I think—looking at the tiled floor, chewing a bagel. He looked up. "How are they?" I asked. He nodded, slowly raising his half-eaten bagel. "Good," he said, "good. In fact, first class." And he added: "I ought to know, I was raised on 'em." We bought a dozen from the pimply youth behind the counter, and took them out on the street with us, where we paraded along, munching the bagels, three tramps in the rain; jauntier now, our courage somewhat restored. We had made a connection, however slight.

We walked. Three abreast; singing out loud, eating bagels, our wet jeans flapping about our ankles. We cocked our snoots. This way, that way: at the Chinese laundries, the spaghetti joints, the pool halls and palm readers and philately shops, at the eucalyptus trees sniveling on the mall. The hell with them all, the whole caboodle. And finally we decided, quite composedly, that we had done what we could in San Francisco and might as well be on our way. . . .

*

Diary, 5th June, Umpqua Lighthouse State Park, Ore.: "This must be—it is—one of the world's great beaches. I say it confidently, though I've seen few of the others. Wide expanse of fine-grained sand, coastline curling away north and south in broad scallops, and dunes, far more extensive than I had imagined, reaching inland a considerable distance in some places, then merging with hills covered with yellow-flowering Scotch broom. Blue sky. Imbrications of surf and cloud.

"I woke this morning before dawn. Weather was starbright, cool; everything was dew-drenched. I've never seen anything like it, not even a September morning in Vermont. The tent was sodden, the picnic table puddled. Is it 'dew of the sea,' rosmarine? Beyond the definition in the dictionary, I don't know

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what rosmarine is, though it has given us RM's name and once I used it in a poem. And this morning, fuddle-headed, I didn't think to taste it, to see if it were brinish.

"I was off to the beach before the others poked out their noses. Walked three or four miles down the coast, then back. Lots of seawrack. A headless salmon, acidulous-looking seaweed. Shells, mostly broken; but the iridescent shards are startingly colorful. I found three unbroken sand dollars, amidst thousands of broken ones, for RM, who had expressed a wish for them. Something more to take home. We have a great collection now, to say nothing of the Bo's 'treasures'—bent sticks, bits of fishline, his 'rings' (old washers picked up at garages), stones, etc. He knows every article, and if I try to discard something, for the sake of space in the car, he reproaches me bitterly. The morning was windy and bright, very bright. Not many others were out. Surf-casters, serious and silent, standing apart and aloof. In the distance a girl, her scarf blowing, her dog bounding beside her. It was a great walk, and I strode along like an athelete, ignoring my wheeze.

"Etude. Sea gull standing just at water's edge. Spindle-legged, high-waisted, hunch-shouldered; the posture of meditation. Deeply philosophical. Walks nervously when I approach, sideways, reluctant to disengage his thoughts, unwilling to leap upward in the effort of flight—the effort of creative imagination. At last he goes, laboring up, then gracefully away over the waves, skimming, tilting, turning; and lands a hundred yards down the beach, in the same relative location at the water's edge. Lands slowly, tentatively, hovering, standing finally with wings still outspread, until he settles himself again and resumes his meditating. Some gulls—or terns, skimmers, whatever they are—resemble, when they are standing, the copperplate etchings of dodos in old books. But the dodo was flightless. Perhaps from too much meditating?

"This evening we took a picnic supper to the beach, and ate in the shelter of a jetty, out of the wind. We built a fire of driftwood, which made a greenish flame. There was a sunset, extremely dramatic. The ruby disk, or darker than ruby, real incarnadine, slipping into the waves. At the last moment we almost thought we saw the sun's heroic flames. Streaks of purple, orange, crimson overhead. Wheeling gulls, very high, tipping

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their wings and catching the last golden sunrays. A star, Hesper, winked near the lighthouse. We ran for our tent, shivering.

"Today, too, I tasted for the first time a fresh mandarin orange, which I'll never forget. A lucent taste, small but piquant; no one could guess, from eating canned mandarin sections, how good the fresh fruit is. The oranges were given us by people in the next tent, a retired couple from Santa Barbara. They gave us several, in fact, from a tree in their backyard at home, and RM gave them one of her skillet-baked cakes. The wife is gray, with gray eyes and perfect features, slim and younger-looking than her fifty-odd years. The husband resembles photographs of Camus. He has advanced emphysema, and cannot walk uphill at all, even small inclines. Once when we were sitting together on a bench, he held up the cigarette smoldering between his fingers. 'That's what's done it.' His tone was simple, matter-of-fact, but with a trace of wonder in it I won't forget either. We talked together, the four or us, a number of times, pleasantly and easily, and the Bo spent most of the day with them. But we never learned their names. Among transients, names have no importance."

*

Transients. Importance. Well, the thing I really won't forget, ever, is the Bo in San Francisco that morning. "Why would we die, papa, why would we die?"—his voice quavering and full of tears. "If we would be careful, wery, wery careful, would we die?"

*

Diary, 19th June, Elko, Nev.: ". . . I left the house, and walked downslope among sage bushes, clumps of ryegrass and rabbitweed, twisted Utah junipers; following gullies and climbing knolls. In an area of a few dozen square yards the density of growth varies considerably. Here the ground was bare, a hot mosaic of multi-colored pebbles, and the sage was stunted and sparse; there the ground was grass-covered and the sage as high as my head. Cicadas sang in the junipers. I tracked one, with my ear cocked, until I found it clinging to a juniper branch. Its shrill

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whirr broke off when I moved but picked up as soon as I stood still, even though I was no more than two feet from the insect; yet close as I was, I couldn't see the movement that produced the sound, but only the cicada rubbing its forelegs together, preening itself. It glistened damply as if it had just emerged from its 'shell,' but if so the shell must have fallen away, because I couldn't find it. I walked on; slowly, looking here and there, picking my way among the sage. I scared up a cottontail, then farther on a jack rabbit. I looked at their 'forms,' mere scrapings in the dirt beneath the sage—not much protection from the mid-afternoon heat. A pair of Brewer's blackbirds circled me, scolded me, flitting from bush to bush as I walked; no doubt I was trespassing on their nesting territory. I found many bones, skeletons of cows: sharp-looking, intricate, long faces with great empty eyes, vertebrae like polished machine parts, flat blades of shoulders. Strange artifacts. I bent for a long time to look at the pebbles near my feet; every color, gleaming black, red, green, golden—and ignorance assails me. Jasper, agate, chrysolite—what are they? Years of learning and I know nothing, or the wrong things. Yet people think that education will save the world. I am certain these stones would take a polish, would turn into what people call jewels. Gem-hunters would be delighted to find them. I straighten up—gasping from the wave of darkness that drains my eyes—and let a handful of colored pebbles fall, one by one. I walk on, listening to the living grass crunch underfoot like dead straw. Not a sign of moisture. I walk to a little hollow where the sage grows tall and strong, thinking perhaps I can find a likely spot for Jim to dig a well, but when I poke into the ground with a stick I find no dampness; only hard yellow grit. [We were visiting Jim Crowl and his wife Lyn, old friends who had a new home ten miles outside Elko.] Here and there are little clearings, a few yards wide, with anthills at the center. The ant communities must be ancient, must be cities where thousands of generations have lived and died, for no sagebrush remains in the clearings, no blade of grass. The ants have killed the vegetation. I find an anthill that looks disused, with no observable opening, flattened on top and rumpled. I dig a trench in it with my toe and bury my cigar. At once ants come pouring out like grain from a torn sack. Medium-sized ants, red at one

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end and black at the other. But at mid-afternoon the surface of the desert is too hot; the ants turn back from their attack on the intruder, retreat into their underground city; the first to turn back run head-on into those still coming out. I climb to the top of a knoll. Rusty cans lie among the sage, most of them ripped with bulletholes. All America is crazy for firearms. Riddled beer cans and gleaming cartridge cases lie everywhere, in forest and field, cove and canyon. From the top of my knoll I look across the valley, northwestward to the distant mountains. The valley is broad and smooth, sloping gently on either side to the Humboldt River. Elko, seen from my looking place, is not more than a smatter of green trees by the river where a few scraps of glass and chrome glitter in the sun, insubstantial and impermanent, as if you could scrape it off the surface with a knife, like any other detritus. I think of the book of letters I have just been reading, written a century ago by a doctor who emigrated from Minnesota to Carson City, leaving his wife behind. Again and again he wrote to her of the hordes of people passing through, following the route of the Forty-Niners: the Humboldt Trail, Virginia City, Al Tahoe, across the High Sierras to Sutter's Fort; a constant traffic of Californians traveling eastward, plains-dwellers traveling westward, people in search of gold, in search of homesteads, searching, searching. Not many stayed. They built towns that they deserted while the hammers were still ringing. On the move; horses, burros, wagons, coaches, then the railroad surging through, the Union Pacific. Northern Nevada is a land of passage—high, barren, scorched in summer and frozen in winter. Those who remain here are on flimsy perches, like crows in a gale. At last I walk back to the house, feeling dry and weak and lazy, a tingle of heat-fatigue in my legs. Such a thin veneer of life on this huge land. Rock and dirt as vast as the sea, as broad as the sky, covered with a scant bristle of sagebrush that shelters a few nervous rabbits, a few skeletons. The cattle on these desolate ranges bellow continually, their coarse voices squalling in the wind, cries of indignation and despair. Never the gentle lowing and mooing of cows at home. This difference is very striking to me—the cows and calves bewailing their pain. Why do these few houses cling here? Why do their inhabitants stay? I can't, for the moment, imagine.

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Even the rattlesnakes are scarce, I'm told. It is a land not hostile, not fierce, but only indifferent, like the wind. I climb the verandah, sit, look out again into the incandescent valley. In my fatigue I am conscious—strangely conscious, as if I had been incompetently anaesthetized—of the attraction this desolation holds for me too, and of the kinship I feel with the people living here. . . ."

*

Diary, 20th June, Elko: "Today I had my grand tour of ranch country. Jim [who was head forester for Elko County in the Nevada forest service] asked me to go with him to Ruby Valley, where he wanted to inspect 'caches' of fire-fighting equipment and set up meetings with his volunteers. Driving the service pickup, we left at eight this morning and returned at five this afternoon. We traveled 200 miles and visited five ranches, two country saloons, and a fish hatchery.

"We headed east from Elko to Secret Valley, a high pass in the Ruby Mountains, then down into Ruby Valley, southward through the valley to the state hatchery at Ruby Lake, back across the mountains into the tiny communities of Jiggs and Lee on the south fork of the Humboldt, and so home.

"Although I hadn't suggested it, Jim introduced me everywhere as 'a small farmer from Vermont,' and it worked. Perhaps I look the part. Anyway I've done enough puttering on farms and among farmers to talk the part without serious blunders. The ranchers accepted me; their wives too.

"Not that I did much talking. I was content to listen and observe. And there was much to see. The country itself: more attractive than the dry, dusty region around Elko. Secret Valley was the delight of the tour from a New Englander's standpoint; a small valley high in the mountains, green meadows beneath rocky cliffs; rather like some of the hidden valleys in the Green Mountains of home. We saw more green trees than elsewhere, willows and poplars, and many birds, especially magpies, redwings, killdeer, doves, meadow larks, and horned larks. The roadside was dense with lupine, Russian thistle, wild iris. Ruby Valley, to which we descended on the far side of the mountains,

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is much bigger, 35 or 40 miles wide in most places, and probably 150 miles long. There the mountains look grander and more remote than in the smaller valleys, while the valley floor, of sage and grass, extends so spaciously that herds grazing far away seemed like specks in the expanse. In the mountains we climbed on narrow roads, mostly paved, beside twisting creeks—pronounced *cricks* by everyone here—under steep groves of juniper and pine. Jim and I ate lunch beside one of the creeks, watching a ruby-crowned kinglet scratch among pine needles on the other side. We talked of Camus—a perennial topic with the Crowls —while we ate our K-rations: beans, cheese, biscuit, applesauce, fruit juice, even cake. A distinct improvement on the field rations of 25 years ago.

"No talk of literature in the valley, however. Wherever we stopped we heard the same topics: drought and the rodeo. Probably most visitors would wonder why there was so much talk of drought. The valley looks green enough, the mountaintops are snowy, the creeks are clear and swift. But when you stop your car and walk to the fence, you see that the grass in the hayfields, though green, is short and spindly, less than half the height you would expect at this season. Yet the grass is 'heading out' and haying can't be delayed; most ranchers said they would begin cutting this week or next. It means a poor crop for those who have no artificial irrigation—the majority. They will be buying hay next winter, since on these high ranges cattle cannot survive on forage alone. The hayfields here, in relation to the number of animals, would seem absurdly small to a New England dairyman, but they are nevertheless essential to the rancher's economy. Actually, Jim says, the snow cover in the mountains is thinner than normal for this time of year, the consequence of a mild winter, and the creeks are lower; many will run dry in a few weeks. Then the grass will turn brown, the sage will parch. Fear of fire is universal. It is bound to happen, of course. Even if no tourist throws out a lighted cigarette, even if no camper is careless with his campfire, even if the railroad emits no spark, still the lightning is certain to strike, probably many times before summer has ended; and if it touches a dead juniper or a tuft of dry grass, disaster may ensue quickly. The only hope is to reach it speedily and with adequate equipment. To this end

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the ranchers seem more than willing to cooperate, although many had disliked Jim—one more government man with a fistful of permits—when he first came here.

"As we drove, Jim scanned the range. Once we saw a whitish puff on the opposite side of the valley. We stopped immediately. I thought I might be about to see fire-fighters in action. But it was only a dust devil whirling on a dry hillside, as we saw when we looked through our binoculars.

"As for the rodeo, it had been a huge success, everyone agreed on that, and the ranchers had enjoyed themselves. A few were still nursing headaches, two days after the event—and not from bronco-riding either. They earn their hangovers, they say; meaning that a hard life entitles them to their occasional debauch. It must be so. I saw no seediness among them, unless you count the elderly woman who runs a post office and bar at a vague crossroad in the Temoke Indian Reservation; a white woman, blotched and bleary, wearing the biggest jeans I ever saw in my life, yards and yards of jeans, size 65 at least, and she filled every inch. But the others, man or woman, are lean and hard, sunburnt and hawkfaced. They look with narrow eyes, never at you, but away somewhere over your shoulder: the long gaze across the range. They do it even indoors, for I noticed they always sit where they can look out a window, turning their chairs if necessary. Distance, distance—this is their element. A laconic people, slow of movement and speech, pausing to draw on a cigarette before they answer your question; and when it comes, the answer will be, like as not, full of humor, wry, sly, deadpan, and poker-faced. These people are devotees of traditional western humor; or is it only western? I found myself thinking about this as we drove along. If Twain was a product of Hannibal and Virginia City, Artemus Ward came from Maine. The purest American invention of all is not the Model T or the McCormick reaper but the mock-solemn anticlimax, from Jack Downing to James Thurber. But it has died out in the east. These ranchers, I said to myself, are Yankees after all, the same tough, unassertive people I know at home, forged in the same essential struggle. And their ranches—well, these farms are 6,000 acres, not the 60 or 160 we have at home, but they are still farms. Work-a-day and dusty, tarnished and weather-worn. Far from the princely

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estates that easterners think of when they hear the word *ranch.* And the ranchhouses are only the same wooden boxes you find everywhere in farm country, north or south, east or west; dry, gaunt, whitewashed clapboards hung on frames too high for their width, sharply peaked. This took me by surprise, and when I stopped to think I realized I had been unconsciously influenced by the specious eastern use of the word *ranchhouse* in real-estate advertising. Everywhere Jim and I were invited in for coffee, and I found myself in the same kitchen I know at home, my neighbors' or my own. Linoleum and oilcloth, a dented coffeepot, chipped white mugs, a can of evaporated milk on the table, a wood range for cooking and a kerosene heater for warmth, black stovepipe thrust into a wall of printed peonies, doors canted in their frames, wrought-iron handles, scarred windowsills, stained sinks. If anything these kitchens were untidier than those at home, with more dirty laundry heaped in the corner, and the kids—plentiful and tow-headed at every ranch—were grubbier. I had the impression these ranch women make poor housekeepers; like their husbands, they are interested only in the stock, the horses, the equipment—the outdoors. But that may be unfair. Who could keep house cleanly in this land of wind and dust? Then too, set in this expansive country under this expansive sky, a house seems less interesting than in New England, not worth much effort. A Nevadan may think that a man's land is his kingdom, but I doubt that many suffer the delusion that his home is his castle. Another point: the coffee was excellent everywhere.

"The only ranch in Ruby Valley that may accord with the eastern image of ranch life belongs, appropriately, to a movie star. A gentleman rancher, an absentee rancher: he spends most of his time in California. Even on this ranch, however, only the main house is plush, while the rest of the layout, including the foreman's quarters where we had our coffee, resembles the others in the valley.

"One distinct contrast between Ruby Valley and Vermont is that here the young people are staying on the land. Sons go to college, but return afterward to take their places at home and eventually to succeed their fathers. One rancher with a 6,000-acre spread, a particularly good one because it lies near Ruby Lake

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and is better watered than most, has reached the age at which he can no longer keep up the burden of ownership and management, yet he is childless. He has no choice, he must offer his place for sale, which means it will likely pass into the hands of an outsider. To the other ranchers this seems a tragedy. I was taken aback by the frankly doleful terms in which they spoke of it. Not only do they fear an influx of outsiders; the spectacle of a family line broken and brought to an end injures their sense of stability, their western faith in the fitness of things. Perhaps in a year or two Ruby Valley will have a second movie star.

"They are successful, these ranchers, and they know it. Their self-assurance is worn like a mantle. What the outsider may not recognize at first, what some outsiders would never recognize, is that this sense of success comes less from their material prosperity, though naturally money is important to them, than from their social and cultural accomplishment. These few score people, most of whom are the fourth or fifth generation on the same land, have created in the 7,000-odd square miles of their handsome domain a life that suits them down to the ground. Now their concern is to keep it unchanged. This is hopeless and foolish, in the long run it may prove dangerous, but I confess I felt a shock of sympathy. We for whom the status quo is anathema are always surprised when we find goodness already in existence. The life of Ruby Valley is good; within its admittedly narrow limits it contains nothing meretricious. To make a good life for oneself in Ruby Valley, one would need to undo very little, but only to add to what is already there.

"Naturally this doesn't mean there are no questions to be asked. What about living on land which one knows has been largely ruined by one's father and grandfather? Ruby Valley was more grass than sage when the first Mormons crossed the desert from Salt Lake to find it, but today the amount of grass forage is small. What about the cultural effect of devoting oneself solely to raising animals for slaughter, on a large scale and for a cash profit? What about the moral effect of owning ten thousand acres when millions cannot get their hands on a square inch? Doubtless personal equanimity in Ruby Valley requires as much self-distortion as it does anywhere else.

"Your composite rancher, what is he like? Not tall, in spite of

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the movie sterotype, but straight as a pole. Below his eyebrows he is brick red from the sun, with cracked lips that cling drily to his cigarette; above his eyebrows he is as white as the bottom side of a fish: from wearing a hat every day of his life, of course, and from wearing it low. His hair, if he has any, is thin. An assembly of ranchers, particularly in the presence of ladies, i.e. uncovered, must make a strange apparition: all those celluloidal, luminescent domes. His jeans and shirt are faded, threadbare, but spotless, often and affectionately laundered, yet his hat is filthy—the filthier the better. It is a black felt hat of the Stetson type, the broad brim rolled at the sides, misshapen, sweat-stained, greasy. It fits his head the way moss fits a stone.

"Jim told me the story of his own hat. He bought it some years ago, but was dissatisfied with it and didn't wear it; the color was wrong. One day he took it from the closet and stuck it in a tub of green dye. The color improved, but the crown shrank —about three sizes. He soaked it in water and jammed it down over his forester's tin helmet, which enlarged it all right, but about two sizes too much. Finally, in heroic despair, he put the hat on his head and poured water on it again. Variegated dye streamed down his face, the felt sagged and steamed and stank. But the hat came back to the right size. Its color was indeterminate, its shape was unique. Jim was pleased enough with the result to take the hat outdoors and rub dirt on it and tromp it a little, and he has worn it on the job ever since. It was, he swears, a decisive factor in his acceptance among the ranchers.

"The composite rancher's wife is dark-haired, dark-eyed, with a hook nose; she is slender, sunburnt, and walks like a man. She wears a sleeveless blouse and tight, short-legged pants. She talks expressionlessly, quietly, and slowly, like her husband, while she gazes out the window. Grass and cattle are more interesting than housework and kids. You ask her—idly, out of politeness, while you are standing below the verandah and she on the steps, both looking across the distance to the grazing herds—where are her children. 'Oh, down in the crick, seeing who can hold the other under.' Said quietly, idly, in the same tone as your question, without the least emphasis or inflection; so that it takes you a moment to realize it is meant as humor. It isn't a good joke; no

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one would ever really laugh at it; yet its manner of delivery disarms your expectations, disarms any expectations whatever; and this is the manner of everything she says. Like her husband, she is never serious, but she is never comic either. Her whole plane of communication is a kind of detached levity, to be relished privately and inwardly. She almost dares you to smile. You know that if you do, you will somehow be the loser, while she will have scored a triumph; you will have broken the spell. But her triumph, like her drollery, will be enjoyed only behind a mask of unconcern.

"Language. *Real* is the universal intensifier; same form for adjective and adverb. *To lay* is standard for *to lie*. I've seen both usages in print often, including billboards and national park signboards, and have heard them on radio and television throughout the west; always used without the least consciousness of error or even colloquialism. These are fixed in the language. It won't be long before they displace the older forms completely. Nothing regrettable in this, even to a relative purist like myself, although poets always feel a little put out when changes in language are accomplished, not by them, but by radio announcers and ad men.

"Two sandhill cranes, very large birds, among brown reeds near a creek, twenty yards apart. Perfectly still. Gray and rust-colored, with long necks stretched high as we pass. They have the minimal but warm simplicity of an Oriental brush drawing: a glimpse of the shores of Wu in Ruby Valley.

"A one-room schoolhouse, spanking new, the smell of new lumber still clinging to it, sawdust and bright nails scattered in the grass. Twenty yards behind it: the trailer where the teacher lives. Although the school is small, some of the pupils may come from 50 miles away.

"Crossroad saloon. There must have been thousands like it in the Old West. The bar is a short counter, perhaps eight feet long—room for four or five customers. Nothing ornate or movie-like about it. Behind the bar, on dusty shelves, a helter-skelter of cigarette cartons, cases of beer and soda, bottles of cheap bourbon, all the same brand. An immense roll-top desk takes most of the space behind the bar. Bulletin board on the wall: election notices, fire regulations, penciled advertisements,

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clippings, comic mottoes. A Latin-American is leaning against the bar, ragged shirt and jeans, a big hat. You expect the sing-song of Mexican English, but when he turns and speaks his language is correct, his voice sonorous—no trace of accent. No explanation either; except that his name is Johnny Vasquez, he has lived in California, and is now living up in the mountains. Maybe a sheepherder. The fat woman on a stool behind the bar is well-spoken too, though she lacks so many teeth you can hardly understand her. Between them, on the bar, are two paper cups, a plastic shot-glass, and a bottle of the cheap bourbon. You are surprised to find these people here. It is really the end of the world, seventy miles from Elko, far from the highway, in a cottonwood grove where two gravel lanes cross. You tell yourself you shouldn't be surprised, in this world nothing is surprising; but you are surprised anyway.

"What about the independence of these people? The ranchers have it, as much as anyone. Alone on the range with their families and hands, making it by themselves, they are solitary, private men. They believe that whatever you do on your ranch is your own business, and when you go to town, whatever you do there is your own business too, as long as you don't violate the 'code': you may drink, gamble, run after whores all you want, but pay your debts, don't cry when you go broke, keep your hands off other men's wives, and refrain from beating your own in public. Beyond this, they are on their own, i.e. men of independent judgment. Yet how alike judgment leaves them! When they come together, for a fire or a shivaree, they can talk, without fear of disagreeable consequences, about anything except religion, which bores them anyway. Politics, economics, social values—these men don't vary a hairsbreadth in their opinions. Their thoughts go all the same way. Tough-minded they may be, but unimaginative, and their tough-mindedness is close to the merely unquestioning. They call it 'accepting reality.' But what they are accepting is what their fathers, or their senators, have told them to. They are inveterate one-party loyalists, voting the same ticket forever. They are the people the government loves; any government, anywhere. They will gripe perpetually, of course, and they may be unfriendly when a new red-tape artist knocks on their door, but they'll go down the line for 'national policy,' whatever it is,

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they'll send their sons readily to the slaughtering grounds, and go themselves if they get the chance.

"What can be said for them then? Aside from their likableness, this: they aren't joiners. A negative virtue, granted. But it saves them in the end from turning their narrowness into bigotry. When a Klan recruiter came to Elko a few months ago, he was unable to sign up anyone. Not a soul. Yet I'm sure a few people here share his convictions. They wouldn't join because they feel there is something evil about a crowd, especially an organized crowd. They will band together to fight a fire, as in the old days they formed posses when the need arose, but these are impermanent associations, and informal—no initiations, no pledges signed in blood. They break up as soon as the reason for their assembling has passed. Hence the narrowness of Elko is preserved from turning into the gang-style bigotry of Natchez or Selma.

"Independence, much as I prize it and need it, is a small, negative virtue after all, which can never save a man from folly. In itself it can only keep his folly also small and negative. That isn't much to be grateful for, but it is something—as we learn every day, watching our society slip, not toward mob rule, but toward mob obedience and conformity. . . . And can nothing more be said for these solitary people? Well, just possibly an independent-minded rancher is more likely to turn out a son with a questing spirit than is a town-bred, middle-classed Rotarian. Possibly; but I'm not convinced either way. . . ."

*

"Gay Wyoming" I called it once in a poem, never having seen it. The name had sounded gay to me. When we got there, I saw I had been right, or at least not wholly wrong. Wyoming: an ancient, eroded, broken land that nevertheless wears its ravages with a debonair imperturbability, like a handsome old rake. We drove eastward in late afternoon, through Shoshone Canyon and across the stinking water of the Shoshone River, looking for a place to camp. At last we stopped by the shore of the Buffalo Bill Reservoir, ten miles outside Cody; a large silver lake set among red cliffs and beneath the embankment of a superhighway. We found water and an outhouse, but no fireplace and no fuel but driftwood.

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The next morning, the 27th June, I wrote in the diary for the first time in several days: "Here we are. Which would be absurd—as if we had come to a destination, not just another stopping place—if I hadn't experienced this morning such an extraordinary sense of 'hereness.' I was up at five. No one stirring, only a few long-distance trucks grinding upgrade on the highway. I built a fire of driftwood by the water's edge, a smelly fire. We have no grill, so I cooked on a piece of 3/8-inch sheet steel I scrounged by the highway last night; it had been cut from a larger plate with a torch, and still showed the bluish scollops left by the acetylin flame. But it made a poor stove. Heavy guage steel is a slow conductor of heat, and I needed an hour and a half to make coffee and boil an egg in an old Dinty Moore Beef Stew can. A pleasant time. I squatted there, feeding little sticks to the fire, squinting across the spangles of rosy dawn-lit water, feeling very much a tramp—unwashed, unkempt, completely myself. A rare enough feeling for most of us. We always think we must be something else, must play a part, wear a particular face and speak in a particular voice. When we're young this seems the thing to do, a necessary and satisfying conformity to an ideal, and we practice it until we become adepts, remolding ourselves in the image we have chosen; then in time it becomes an unconscious act, and we the unconscious actors. We keep it up all our lives, willingly or unwillingly. But for me, as I grow older I cherish more and more the moments when I can thrust away all make-believe, even the make-believe of speech, and sink back into myself like a pacified snake recoiling into its basket, charmed by the music of . . . of nothing, water lapping, a stick washing to and fro: the wash of existence. Then I become myself, undivided, neither subject nor object, without thought, without even the shadow of thought that is language. I become simply a node of consciousness in the brilliant hereness, a kind of undefined intensity, yet an intensity that determines everything, hills, water, rocks, and sky, without naming them. This is one aspect, at any rate, of a man's freedom and strength, the sinking that brings him, I don't know exactly how, to the same affectionate and creative intuition of reality that he reaches at other times by ascent. . . ."

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PHILIP LEVINE

To a Fish Head Found on the Beach Near Málaga

1
Flat eventless afternoon
searching among stones for nothing,
I come upon the fish head.
"Hola!"
Right off, head to head, with this
wide-eyed, unlistening remnant
of dead metal trailing its single
stiff feather of flesh.
We talk of loneliness,
of the fear of stones falling like rain,
hatred of water tumbling out of dreams
and filling our small rooms, shafts of sand
sifting under doors, filming
first the glasses, then the eyes,
weighing down the lips, the cry.

2
Here, halfway
from home, I discover my head, its hideous
King Tongue going. My good hands explore it,
the hair thinning, the eyes scratched
and hot, glad to let the lids thump down,
and the poor muscles, unsleeping,
as burned as drawn ropes.
Only the chin happy, hidden in fur.

3
But how good to find companionship
of any kind. Fish head and man head
communing in their tongue, an iron yawn
out over the waves, the one poem born
of the eternal and always going back.

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I throw the fish head to the sea.
Let it be fish once more.
I sniff my fingers
and catch the burned essential oil
seeping out of death. Out of beginning,
I hear, under the sea roar, the bone words
of teeth tearing earth and sea,
anointing the tongues with stone and sand,
water eating fish, fish water,
head eating head to let us be.

Hola Miguelin!

1
The night is rising in the young grass—
Before noon and the land wind
sways through the fields. Along the trunk
of each blade, a juice rising
toward the pale crown.

I shut my eyes and imagine
a black dried bough of olive.
I bend it. When it gives
with a dry cough
a fine dust rises into our nostrils.

2
She stumbles into the noon—this morning
she was a shy wife—and the young
coarse wine that numbs
her arms and cools the sweat on
her forehead is summer itself.

If she goes forward she does so
from side to side
on her long delicate legs, bearing
herself between them, a faint
musk, a crown of curls, a gift
for the night that is always rising.

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Autumn

Out of gas south
of Ecorse. In the dark
I can smell the dogs
circling behind the
wrecked cars.
On a sidestreet,
unlighted, we find a
new Chevy. I suck
the tube until
my mouth fills
and cools with new
American wine.

Old man says,
Elephant moves slow, tortoise
don't hardly move at all and they
has no trouble to be
a hundrid.
The small
ladders of hair dangle
from his nostrils, hands
peppered like old eggs.

I left you in Washington,
honey, and went to Philly. All the
way beside the tracks, empires
of metal shops, brickflats, storage tanks,
robbing the air.
Later, behind
barbed wire, I found small arms
swaddled in cosmoline, tanks, landing
craft, half tracks smiling
through lidded eyes,
grenades blooming in
their beds.
April,
1954, we've got each other

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in a borrowed room.

Who comes before dawn through
the drifts of dried leaves
to my door? The clawed gopher,
the egret lost on his way, the inland
toad, the great
Pacific tortoise?
I rise
from a warm bed and go and
find nothing, not a neighbor
armed and ready, not a cop,
not even my own son
deserting.
I stand
in a circle of light, my heart
pounding and pounding at the door
of its own wilderness.

Snow steaming on the still
warm body of the jackrabbit
shot and left, snow
on the black streets
melting, snow falling endlessly
on the great runways that
never fill.
The twentieth autumn
of our war, the dead heart
and the living clogged
in snow.
A small clearing
in the pines, the wind
talking through the high trees,
we have water, we
have air, we have bread, we have
a rough shack whitening,
we have snow on your eyelids,
on your hair.

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I Choose You

for Jim

Soft eyed,
dog haired, rises in the first
coolness of night, carries the baby
to the panel truck. Cissie wakens
and they go.
Got to drive
the whole way to Victoria. First light
in Oregon, the old cypress snaps its
leaves awake. A stream hardens
from black to grey, grey to silver,
and it's a day. Heart says, Wait,
but the small towns fall back, closed fields,
unbending dull alloy sheaves, saw mills
yellowing the trees.
Back home
a stoned and bearish brother wakens
before the television and blinks the blue
dawning in. A stalled tractor guns
in the poisoned air, and it begins
one more time.
Lives at war,
they stun the tears welling in
each other's eyes. Still, little brother,
little sister, still, no turning
back.
I choose you.

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VERNON YOUNG

Cinema Borealis

If we are looking for new determinants of a national style, the key year in Swedish film, to my way of thinking, was 1942, when Molander made *Rid I Natt (Ride Tonight)* and Sjöberg crowned his experimental phase with *Himlaspelet (The Road to Heaven). Ride Tonight,* from the novel by Vilhelm Moberg, projected a theme of tyranny from seventeenth-century Swedish history, in the fond hope that an analogy with the contemporary battle against Hitler would thereby be felt. It is a period piece which most film critics have tended to laugh off or to relegate as a circumstantial product. Circumstantial it was and from that angle, perhaps, not altogether convincing (a rural insurgence of Smålanders, oppressed by the bailiffs of Queen Christina, is hardly of the same stuff as war against the Third Reich and its allies.) What the film could boast, positively, beside a well-knit plot and (save from the actresses!) many credible characterizations, was a poetic lustre never so confidently achieved by Molander in his earlier films: a poetry of northern darkness, shot through with pastoral touches which yet remained subordinate to the stern drift of the narrative. It was Sjöstrom and Stiller, preserved in Molander's memory; the Moberg story gave body to the opportunity and the atmosphere was in no small measure the contribution of the cinematographer, Åke Dahlquist, who had served Molander and Hellström admirably in *One Night* and who, by 1942, had thirty films to his name.

In spare outline, the film is about the refusal of an obdurate peasant, Svedje, to pay excessive taxes to the German (!) squire representing Christina. Branded as an outlaw and forced to hide in the rock-and-forest wilderness, he is hunted down by his own neighbors and killed like a dog by the professional hangman, with whom he had once refused to drink. His fate, after the fact, inspires the community to postponed rebellion; a flaming cross is sent by relay through the back-country, signifying—*Ride Tonight!* This heroic denouement barely mitigates the murder of Svedje by "neutrals," nor the incidental execution of

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his betrothed, thought to be a witch. Radical weaknesses there are in this film—principally in the love story and in the handling of the musical score. These are more than redressed, it seems to me, by the generally firm sense of place and people, by the unsparing evaluation of Svedje's fellowmen as bone-headed, superstitious traitors. Many visual touches in this film—strained sunlight on a clearing in the woods, shots of a log-house interior framed by a low, heavy-lintel doorway, a portrait composition of the dour executioner wearing a flapped headgear to cover the place where his ears should be—strongly suggest a provenance for similar effects and closeups in Bergman's *The Seventh Seal.* Since the elements are common to the setting of both films, this may well be coincidence merely. But in any case, *Ride Tonight* can be seen as a forceful precedent of the woodland mode to which, each in its own way, both *The Seventh Seal* and *The Virgin Spring* belong.

It is overshadowed quite by Sjöberg's *The Road to Heaven.* Tiresomely exploited today for the tourist, the north-central province of Dalarna has long been noted for its conservative retention of old folkways: the traditional houses, dances, costumes and customs. Rune Lindstrom—a very fine actor and writer in his prime (his active period in film attained its peak with the best scripts ever supplied to Arne Mattsson, in the early '50s)—had created a play to be staged outdoors annually, in Dalarna, derived from themes in nineteenth-century wall-paintings of the region. These paintings depicted Old Testament stories with a local flavor—the characters were dressed in the Dalarna style of the period and earlier. Lindstrom's play has the simple narrative quality of a morality or a ballet, modestly designed for the resources of community staging. Matt, a wide-eyed but quite spirited peasant, takes the road to Heaven in order to upbraid the Lord (an old Dalarna pastor) with sundry human ills and evil visitations. On the way he encounters numerous Biblical characters, is exposed to age-old human vices and betrayals and, at the end, is received by the Lord, in his stovepipe hat, and reunited with his sweetheart in a super-Dalarna cottage.

When filming this ingenuous story, on the basis of a scenario supplied by Lindstrom, the first thing Sjöberg did, inevitably,

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was to *baroque*-ize the story material. His film is epic, in scope and in manner: the simple pilgrimage over Dalarna hill and dale becomes a fantastic journey through some of the most voluptuous episodes of Biblical story, during which Matt is transformed from a gullible peasant, bewildered by the fatal events which start him on his quest (a scourging drought and the burning alive of his sweetheart as the witch who is responsible for various local calamities) into a pitiful victim of the worldly temptations put in his path and, finally, into a monster of avarice who acquires power and riches in the most dastardly tradition of capitalistic venality. Consequently, when he meets the Lord face to face, he is in no position to question the origins of cupidity and injustice among men.

The film is a *tour de force:* a spectacular display of realism, bewitching pastoral conceits, anachronisms deftly handled. Into it Sjöberg put everything he then knew about film-making, which was considerable. The result, free of quasi-political tensions, was a completely liberated territory for Swedish film. I would still include *The Road to Heaven* among the most sheerly beautiful films ever made (not overlooking, in the years that followed, Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast,* a dozen Japanese films nor, on related ground, the wilderness films of Arne Sucksdorff). To Swedish critics in 1942 its splendor was not self-evident and the public was not unanimously charmed. While some were impressed by the scenic magnitude and the disciplined sweep of the crowd scenes (a sequence of revelry at Solomon's court and a mad torchlit sleigh ride over the ice was generally admired), most seemed unaware that here was the most dynamic step taken in the Swedish film since the days of Stiller. Many resented the simple folk elements being expanded to fit Sjöberg's inordinate purposes: those who in any case were bored by regional themes, preferring to see Swedish editions of Soviet ideology, French pessimism or American bigtown lowlife, regarded the film as irrelevant to the hour. Of course, it was, if one is judging film by the pertinence it has to one's immediate history. For some time the attitude towards this film was begrudging; only within the last eight years, when it has been revived on the television for a larger and more variously conditioned audience, have some of the younger critics recog-

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nized its visible loveliness. However it may suit anyone's prejudice to dismiss it, *The Road to Heaven* stands today as the film, if one had to choose a single example, with which Swedish cinema craft was re-defined in a context rootedly Swedish. Sjöberg pointed the way for other film-makers to find in their own surround—whether their treatment was to be realistic or fanciful is beside the point—the substance for their inspiration.

In 1942, however, other factors were mandatory. The War was on, life-and-death issues were being engaged (outside Sweden, at any rate). Other film-making countries were suffering from limited production opportunities (to put it coldly). Swedish film producers were anxious to contribute internationally acceptable films to a limited, if profitable, market, and at the same time supply the home audience which was expanding precisely at the moment when the imports were being curtailed. Now, for export purposes, historical and legendary material within a sylvan setting (even if as competently managed as in *Ride Tonight* or as dazzling as in *The Road to Heaven*) was not likely to be a profitable commodity. Further, by 1943, the Axis powers had made clear (at the Venice International Film Festival and through more direct agencies) that films from Sweden about the War, even by implication, or those likely to incite revolutionary sentiments, were not tolerable. Swedish film-makers tried to supplement their literary sources with city-based melodrama, with Social-Democrat treatments of back-country life[1] and, increasingly, with excursions into psychopathology, crime and crises of religious belief.

Hampe Faustman, over-long hailed as a director of promise who in fact never qualified for international status, made *Night in the Harbor* (1943), a dockside crime story of seamen on the loose; in 1944, *The Girl and the Devil,* a witchcraft tale far inferior to

[1] There were two principal "treatments": one was idyllic, a nostalgic glance at vanishing countryside customs; the other, politically critical of previous social conditions, with strong implications that under the Social Democrats rural life had been made bearable. Either type was likely to be infused with what came to be known locally as "Social-Democrat pornography." *One Summer of Happiness* (*Hon dansade en sommar*), produced by Nordisk Tonefilm, 1951, was a conscious attempt to capture the foreign markets with a nude swimming scene (in fact innocuous, and poetically directed by Arne Mattsson) introduced into a story of opposing generations which might have seemed socially critical in 1919! Until *Dear John* surpassed it, *One Summer* was the most profitable Swedish film ever made.

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the achievements of Molander and Sjöberg; in 1945 a locally situated version, not very inventive, of Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment.* Hasse Ekman made an uncertain beginning with a war film, a political film and a gloomy drama which in point of departure resembled Noel Coward's *Brief Encounter* (filmed two years later by David Lean), before settling into a sequence of films largely inspired by deviated mental behaviour. Arne Mattsson left engineering for film-making and before striking his native vein of tough-men-in-the-wilderness scored an early *succes de scandale* by filming an exposé novel based on fact, concerning a prominent Swedish citizen who had been "railroaded" into an insane asylum. Two of the most extraordinarily successful films of the period were grounded in religious idealism (Lutheran ethos), tinctured, respectively, with madness and fanatical abnegation: Gustav Molander's *The Word,* 1943, and Anders Henrikson's *Blood and Fire,* 1945. The former, based on a play by the Dane, Kaj Munk, received a more spacious, open-air treatment than Carl-Theodor Dreyer's filming of the same work (1955). Rune Lindstrom, who had played Mats in *The Road to Heaven,* gave another of his impressive, idiosyncratic performances; his ecstatic pastor was a being all air and flame. The Henrikson film (about a Christ-like Salvation Army officer) was distinguished solely by its director's acting; it was otherwise refulgent with heightened shots of rain-glistening pavements, and every window-transom was a crucifix (in memory of *The Informer*)![2]

[2] To those of us who loved him as an actor, the death of Anders Henrikson, in 1965, at the age of 69, was like the loss of a personal friend. Partly because he was an immensely subtle, subjective non-rhetorical actor, partly because his career was confined to Sweden, he never acquired such fame as was bestowed on Lars Hanson or Victor Sjöstrom. For me he is one of perhaps a half-dozen of the most memorable actors in the history of film and memorable in the few of his stage roles I was privileged to see. Thoroughly dissimilar in approach and style, Hanson and Henrikson were paired in a Strindberg play for two characters which I saw in 1958, as pure an example of give-and-take playing as I have witnessed on any stage. Henrikson also played the most extraordinary Polonius I have ever seen in Sjöberg's 1959 production of *Hamlet.* Among his best film roles I would instance The Lord in *The Road to Heaven,* the father in Gustav Molander's *Spite* (*Trots*), 1952, from a script by V. Sjöman with assistance of Ingmar Bergman, and the husband in "For a Consideration," the second of two Strindberg stories combined in one film, *Married* (*Giftas*), 1955, which he directed—brilliantly—himself. Henrikson, in fact, directed thirty films but only those in which he, himself, appeared, have any claim on critical attention. He was perhaps too intensively and personably an actor to have been more than a competent director. The actor-director, with genius in both professions, is an exceptional phenomenon.

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If Ingmar Bergman saw many of these films, during the very years when he was in transit from theatre to movie-making, his attention to them was much more likely to have been casual rather than focused, since he was subject to so many other influences. He denies *any* influence from them. A corpus of Swedish film existed —this much one can say: necessarily, his own could not have been widely divergent from the demands of the film industry nor from the climate of things which he shared with his contemporaries. This climate was naturally not conveyed by cinema, alone. Normally, the movies represent but a shadow, or a popularization (shadow of a shadow) of a country's guiding beliefs. Since the war years were those in which Bergman entered theatre, then film-making, the mental atmosphere of the time was contagiously modified by the international situation and by the reaction towards it of those articulate in the areas he inhabited—those of theatre and of literary talk. The parental figures, Strindberg and Hjalmar Bergman, prevailed. But fashionable during the stress of the Forties were a number of poets who projected the guilt-feeling of Swedish neutrality or, commonly, a reflexive desire to become *completely* neutral—metaphysically neutral—with no quarter given, one infers, to political imperatives, or the implications of history, and with no consolation forthcoming, from nature, from philosophy, from art, from religion—or from their friends. Contingently motivated by the claustrophobia of the day, such literature did not differ radically from its predecessors: it was the vehicle of a characteristically Swedish amazement at the operations of history and the given conditions of human existence.

The spokesmen of this attitude came to be known as the *Fyrtiotalists*—the Forty-ists. Karl Vennberg—who, with Erik Lindegren, published a *Fyrtiotalist* anthology in 1947—probably summarized their viewpoint concisely when he declared that to live was "to choose between the indifferent and the impossible." A comparable alienation was expressed in the title of Lindegren's 1946 publication (which included verse written six years earlier), *The Man Without a Way*. The most extreme symptom of the movement (or should one say stasis?) was the brief revulsion of Stig Dagerman, who wrote a handful of overwrought stories and a play—outcries of perplexity and nausea—before his suicide at 31. It has always seemed to me that Dagerman's essential tragedy (and in Sweden he is not unique in this respect) consisted in his

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inability to distinguish, for himself, the prison which, at that hour notably, was Sweden, from the prison he believed to be the world. "To admit one's terror is the first step towards gaining a victory over it," he announced. He was unequal to his own challenge (Bergman has followed this cue rather more successfully) and one wonders if his literature would today in Sweden be valued so highly if he had not become a martyr to his own suffocating and uncomprehending anxiety. Much of the contemporary inhibition and resistance was a heritage from the spiritual defeatism that characterizes Swedish literature; much, to be sure, was induced by the predicament of a country-full of people sitting under a blackout, with nobody to fight but themselves.

Bergman was too young to qualify as even an associate member of the *Fyrtiotalists.* However, on the perimeters of university circles and in theatre green-rooms he would have been exposed to their masochistic doctrines. Ten films, a half-dozen plays and five years later, when the poets themselves were learning another refrain, Bergman appeared to be recapitulating their earlier burden in a context where it was no longer urgent; he was a belated *Fyrtiotalist.* In this he was not alone; nor does his lagging infection wholly account for the tortured content of his plays and early films (to say nothing of the later ones!). While the terrified proclamations of the Forties cannot be overlooked as contributing factors in Bergman's more suicidal self-expression, factors quite as indelible had already been established: further back, deeper down, closer to home. When a man writes his first books or makes his first films (we are assuming someone seriously involved) he is the sum of all the forces which have made him, but these forces are not consciously available to him in expressive forms. Immaturity, restriction of his liberty to express himself, self-indulgence—any of these may inhibit or divert his acknowledging what the forces may be. He is not prepared to recognize what in his experience is essential and what may be a subterfuge for evading the subject peculiar to him. That subject may be growing inside him, yet he will live with it for years without being able to give it clear expression. In short, his art suffers because he doesn't, himself, know who he really is; suffers just as much, if he too strenuously makes *this* a primary question, with a blind eye for all those others and towards a world in which he

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is of no more count than a blade of grass. This was certainly Bergman's case: an overweening preoccupation with his own pains and an overwhelming innocence of their real source. If it may be said that his total production has been a nagging adventure in self-revelation, the earlier films (and the plays) scarcely transcend that definition, whereas the later films are often works of art.

The real sources of Ingmar Bergman's films were in himself. But what *is* a self?—an accumulation of temperament around the living cell of a culture? The sources of the Bergman films were in his local Swedish inheritance, with all that implies of external conditioning and personal reaction. The matter of the films, whatever else came to be included, represents the strategies with which he met the consequences of his inheritance.

*

Ingmar Bergman was born, 1918, in the university town, Uppsala, just north of Stockholm. When he was six-years-old he accompanied his parents to the capital city where his father, a clergyman, assumed duties as chaplain at a nursing-home and, some years later, acquired the ministry of Hedvig Eleanora church, in Stockholm. . . . This much everyone who has read film biography seems to know. What escapes many is the significance of the birth date. To have been born in Sweden in 1918 was comparable to having been born in England or the United States (other differences allowed for) about 1890. Sweden was rural, pious and remote in 1918 (the year Stiller was making *Sir Arne's Treasure*). Stockholm could have hardly been a very urbane capital, though in certain quarters it was probably a great deal more gracious than it is now. 1918 marked the end of the First World War. Bergman was born at the close of one war; he came of age at the outbreak of another; he came of age again—as a film director—shortly after the termination of the second war: two wars, moreover, in which Sweden had not fought. When personal traits and collateral circumstances are blended in the biography, the importance of this span of time, embracing the definitive years of Bergman's development, cannot be exaggerated. The sequence guaranteed, at climactic moments, a horizon of anxiety, even had other provocations been lacking.

As a child, Bergman commuted frequently between his par-

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ents' home in the city and his grandmother's house in Uppsala, the latter an indelible furnishing of his memory—a defunct mansion, so to speak, capacious, mysterious and opulent in an older fashion, loaded with chandeliers, tiled stoves, paintings of Italian cities, a forest of portières, rhetorical furniture and genteel bric-a-brac. We know that he was quickly impressionable, tyrannically sensitive to atmosphere, solitary by inclination yet fascinated by things theatrical—that "other world" of artifice which many of us instantly learn to prefer if the "real world" is not compatible with our wish to manipulate it—among which were the Biblical tales painted on the vaults and ceilings of the country churches he visited with his father. One of his most cherished acquisitions was a small Oriental shadow-theatre given him by a guest at his grandmother's; when a little older, about ten, he was entrusted with a toy cinematograph for which he etched cartoons on a roll of film. The future was all around him. . . . Taken (at which age I'm not sure) to a production of *Red Riding Hood* (staged by the young Alf Sjöberg), he allegedly sobbed so loud at the girl's fate (or at that of her grandmother?) that he had to be removed from the premises.

During his adolescence he was enrolled in a private academy, the customary solution resorted to by parents when a youngster doesn't want to go to school in the first place. Theatre was Bergman's chosen school, then and thereafter. By whatever theatrical expression was offered in the Stockholm of the Thirties—whether drama or operetta—he was enraptured, and he displayed a strong taste for the bravura style of entertainment. He had a Wagner phase, a Nietzsche phase and a Strindberg phase. Every Swede has a Strindberg phase: it lasts from the cradle to the grave. At the age of 16—that would have been in 1934—Bergman saw the first of Olof Molander's now legendary productions of Strindberg at Dramaten (Royal Dramatic Theatre), an experience that has remained memorable for him to this day. And the extent to which Strindberg has permeated the nervous tissue of his films is almost too self-evident to be pointed out. When 17 he passed his Student Examination (indispensable requirement for admittance to the University) but he suffered such binding anxiety at the prospect of failure that he

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avenged himself for the fright, while recovering, by writing the story which eventually became the script of Alf Sjöberg's film, *Hets (Fury* or, in the U. S., *Torment,* by which title I prefer to designate it hereafter).

Bergman spent the summer of his nineteenth year on an island of the Stockholm archipelago (commonly known as The Skerries): by his own confession, a harrowing season. He lost the girl he loved; he lost his faith in revealed religion—in which order we can only assume; given his background, it would seem likely that if the circumstances attending his separation from the girl were sufficiently bitter, a failing trust in divine support would have followed. At nearly the same time, though Bergman has been unable to place the event—his memory for the chronology of those years is by now confused—he also lost, by death, a very close male companion. This sequence of tragedy and shock, together with a patent element of guilt, is incorporated, or at least suggested, in almost all the plays and film scenarios he wrote (or in which he had merely a hand) during the years immediately following. The girl in question, whom he first named Marie, appeared in his work in so many contradictory guises that Bergman, himself, has subsequently been hard put to explain which was prototype and which a figment suggested by or transposed from the original. We had better assume that the actual circumstances were never literally reproduced in any of the films; it is their general configuration which is conspicuous, recurring again and again, with the characters thereof split, reversed, modified, compounded—surviving in one film (existentially, I mean), perishing in another.

I assume I have not to underline the grave importance, for the son of a clergyman, of losing or believing he has lost his religious fidelity—and with all allowance made for a degree of self-dramatization which has seldom been absent from Bergman's personal declarations. From time to time, rumors have been broadcast that Bergman hated his father: not a surprising imputation when you realize what a clear field his movies represent for the Freudian examiner. Just as inevitably, the insinuation has been denied: his elder brother (who is in the "diplomatic service"!) and his sister (she lives in England) both have pro-

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tested that there is no truth in the assertion and Bergman has stated for Swedish publication that he once inflated his rebellion against authority with damaging implications for his father and mother which he subsequently regretted. While nobody outside a given family circle (nor, very often, inside) knows what concealed animosities or terrors may be harbored, there would seem to be ambivalence enough in Bergman's relation to his parent (of his mother we scarcely learn anything) without a Karamazov complex being introduced. Nonetheless, that the attitude towards the father is the attitude towards God, Dostoievsky, before Freud, assured us. And in our post-Freudian age few filmgoers can be unaware that in Bergman's films undue place is given to rivalry with or mollification of a father-figure, and paramount emphasis is placed on the theme of God's dereliction from his obligations towards Man. Bergman told Vilgot Sjöman during the shooting of *Winter Light* that when he was a boy the customary penalty for domestic offenses, in his household, was to be stood in a closet. For milder breaches of conduct he was totally ignored: his parents refused to speak a word to him. (No news to survivors of an English boarding-school, where it is known as being "put in Coventry.") Bergman confided that he is now offended by nothing so much as being ignored when he addresses someone. Sjöman readily made the connection between this reminiscence and a prevailing lament in Bergman's films: "God is silent."[3]

It does make psychiatric sense to infer that Bergman's attitude towards his father would have been equivocal. If a boy feels an initially strong obligation to admire the parent and if, furthermore, he is humorless (which at heart Bergman appears always to have been), grief may well be the penalty for equivocation. We may imagine, without presumption in this case, that once the boy in question begins to see his father—not as a haloed vicar of the All-Powerful—but as a mere man with habits and idiosyncracies and irritating restrictive rights, like all other parents, he will next begin to doubt if such a man is in truth

[3] *L136 Dagbok med Ingmar Bergman*, Vilgot Sjöman (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1963). A day-by-day diary during the shooting and aftermath of *Winter Light*. In the film, Tomas, the pastor, recalls a childhood terror when he was left alone in the house one evening and ran screaming through the rooms and outdoors, crying out for Father.

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divinely sanctioned to bring consolation to the souls of others. Remorse will be the consequence; since father is kind and instructive (when he's not condemning Ingmar to a dark closet and silence), taking him on nature-study walks and narrating the vivid stories of the Bible, the boy's doubt must be sinful! And in that grandmother's house, peopled with magical presences by this boy's agile fancy, one may well believe that demons were supposed by him to lurk behind the clock or in the chandeliers at night, demons like those in *The Dance of Death,* painted on the vaults of country churches, demons that might carry him off and stand him in a black closet if he impenitently persevered in his heathen misgivings. Childhood, for the introvert who is without specifically *religious* ambivalence, is a stifling enough ordeal. Time is interminable—a minute is an hour, hours are days—punishment is an outrage, a normal fear is an eternity of horror. The child whose imagination is in excess of his talent for venting it lives a deferred life, waiting for the unbearable pressure to lift when he will be able to liberate, express and avenge himself. By the time he has reached something like maturity he breaks surface into the daylight like a swimmer who has been forcibly held under. His reaction, if by nature he lacks a proportionate sense of things, will be often vindictive and not infrequently illusory, for he has long cultivated the secret vice of believing himself threatened, suppressed, injured. If, at the next decisive threshold, he meets love and death at the same time, it is small wonder if his ensuing attempts to reconcile them are unbalanced and obsessive. From such victims are derived our neurotic legions, a good part of our criminal fringe, our political tyrants—and occasionally, our artists.

In Bergman's earlier films, seemingly unrelated to the God-is-absent complaint, there is a distinct note of sexual hostility towards the older men depicted. Conceivably, a radical modification in his response to his father was henceforth transferred to another adult (later, almost certainly, to The Critic!) with whom he had become competitively involved. I say *conceivably* because I am always prepared, in the investigation which follows, to cancel my speculations at the borders of the personal. I should prefer to discuss Bergman's films without touching his personal life at all but not only do the films, more often than not, make

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this a difficult discipline, Bergman, himself, vitiates one's sense of discretion by the provocative egoism he has so often displayed. Beyond the more obvious connections, however, without which his films can only academically be analyzed, I shall make an effort to be diffident. (His marriages, for instance, are, in my opinion, completely forbidden territory for the critic.) I do not believe it is important (for us!) to *determine* Ingmar Bergman's nuclear conflict: sufficient to observe that Bergman's efforts to resolve it artistically are, if sometimes confused, almost invariably *interesting!*

After military service, a duty he did not find distressing, Bergman entered the University of Stockholm; his major study was ostensibly Literature and Art. Today he confesses that he was bored by most of the literature he read. Dostoievsky seems to have been his single literary passion—always excepting Strindberg. Clearly he could have derived but scanty intellectual advantage from this institution, for he was soon and busily engaged with theatre. Invited to stage plays at a Christian organization in Stockholm, where *what had been a church* was now a theater (so often life conspires with our drift), he produced for his first program Sutton Vane's *Outward Bound* (that veteran stock-company item of yore, in which the passengers on an ocean liner discover that they are dead). Bergman, himself, *played God*—strictly speaking, God's steward. His second directorial contribution was *Lucky Peter's Journey,* by Strindberg, a play with which he had been familiar since childhood. Dramatic irony continued to play into his hand: during the Spring of 1940, at the very hour when, for Scandinavia, the War began in earnest—Denmark occupied, Norway mobilized—Bergman was staging *Macbeth!*—in which he played the role of King Duncan.[4]

These productions earned him an invitation, in 1940, to direct plays at Student Theatre (not wholly collegiate in makeup; it employed professional actors, too). For his introductory production, he chose *The Pelican,* which Strindberg had written as an inaugural piece for his Intimate Theatre, in Stockholm, 1907. When he left the University he found part-time engagement,

[4] Four years later he re-staged the play at Halsingborg: as before with a declared anti-Nazi stress. In an unsigned program note, Bergman declared that the issue of *Macbeth* now cried out with "ruthless clarity—We must have a belief." And Macbeth struggled with his conscience between Witches and a luminous crucifix.

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without pay, at the Stockholm Opera where, though he was given a fancy title, he appears to have functioned as a prompter and errand-boy. The experience rewarded Bergman's curiosity; he became familiar with the world of backstage apparatus on a large scale. Otherwise he was far from idle, at one period directing plays at two theatres simultaneously.[5]

His most fateful encounter during these seasons was with Elsie Fisher, a Norwegian dancer trained in England who was appearing in a program for which she had composed her own choreography. Bergman, duly impressed, asked her to help him stage a pantomime-ballet for children with which he was momentarily occupied. She consented. Not long thereafter (Spring, 1943) she also consented to become his wife. (The marriage lasted five years.) Bergman's writing had so far been confined to stories; the first Mrs. Bergman encouraged him to try plays. With alacrity he took her advice and among the first he wrote was an item called *The Station,* never published or produced, but to which he had unfortunate recourse, later on, for the film script of *Eva* (directed by Gustav Molander).

The first of his plays produced—by Bergman, himself, at Student Theatre (September, 1942)—is well worth our noting, since it contained in solution, as it were, the Bergman cosmos. *Kaspar's Death* was developed from an earlier adaptation he had attempted of a Hans Christian Andersen tale about Death and a Traveller. The achieved version assumed a sort of Punch-and-Judy style, with choreographic elements. The gist of the matter consisted of Kaspar's doomed effort to escape the pallid felicities of marriage by revelling at a tavern. Forced by his fellow bibulants to dance on the table until he collapsed, he was then carried away by Death, in a large black coffin. Brought before the Lord to be judged and

[5] That malice domestic was an impressive subject to the young Bergman is perhaps underlined by his producing both *Macbeth* and *The Pelican* twice. The latter, one of four Chamber Plays, I find impossible to take seriously. The pelican is a devouring mother (literally she is depicted as having taken the children's food for her own nourishment) who drives her husband into the grave and cripples her children for independent maturity. And the daughter's suitor, it is implied, was the mother's lover. The play ends with the son setting fire to the house in which he and his sister, locked in each others arms, perish, while mother jumps from the window. The son's all but last words constitute for me the most comical line in Strindberg: "Poor mother—she was so wicked!" It's the dramaturgy, not the psychology, that confounds me!

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disposed of, Kaspar pleads eloquently to be excused from going to Heaven—for that would repeat precisely the kind of existence with his Kasparinna from which he had in desperation escaped to the joys of the tavern.

Marriage as an ordeal; the world of fellow-players as a creative escape; Death standing by; an Old Testament God to whom, with a certain suspension of disbelief, one may plead: here are nearly the essential *dramatis personae* of Bergman's future theatre and film. All that's needed—beside another female—is a devil, and that personage he was very soon not only to supply but to become attached to with exceptional tenacity. *Kaspar's Death,* slight as it may have been, was Bergman's nuclear creative deed, from which the larger consequences would follow: his projection of a moral scheme of things to which he would make perennial return, a theatrical scheme of just this order—a morality, a farcical interlude, a fairy-tale—used as an *entr'act,* a play-within-a-film, whereby he would appeal nostalgically to the naive, enduring microcosms of a fading belief.

At the chronological moment, however, this modest pantomime play was crucial in Bergman's career for reasons more pragmatic. Its production was received with generous approval by its limited audience and by a critic on *Svenska Dagbladet,* who found especially poignant and macabre the moment when Kaspar, sitting in his grave, sings to drive away fear. As a direct result of this press notice, Bergman received a telephone call from the enterprising Stina Bergman,[6] then head of the script department at Svensk Filmindustri. Would Mr. Bergman be interested in submitting a story idea for a film? . . . . Yes, he certainly would be.

[6] No relation to Ingmar. She was the widow of Hjalmar Bergman, novelist and playwright (1883-1931). Since the simple content of *Kaspar's Death* has been said to derive from H. Bergman (as well as from Par Lagerkvist), this may be the place for me to mention that the alleged influence on I. Bergman of H. Bergman I have never been able to pin down. The assertion has often been made with no specific citations. Hjalmar Bergman was a writer of many moods and of ranging interests. Few of his books have been translated into English and Swedish critics find him difficult to summarize adequately; he evades the categories. His most admired vein was that of worldly disenchantment conveyed ironically, scarcely an attitude which I. Bergman could have authentically inherited. The only work by H. Bergman I know anything of which might have significantly disturbed I. Bergman is *Clown Jack,* clearly an autobiographical exercise in which the title character exploits his own terror when he discovers how delighted the audience is at his simulation of it. "I was born human," he confesses, "I lived as a clown, I sold my heart. I shall die poor." (Note Ingmar Bergman's use of "Jack"—in my ensuing text—and consider certain aspects of *The Naked Night* and *The Magician.*)

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And the sequel to this invitation from SF, after their rejection of seven other manuscripts he offered, was their acceptance of his story, *Hets*—or *Torment*—to be directed by Alf Sjöberg.

*

> Before the gates of Stockholm, in 1542, a company of players performs an interlude depicting the Creation as having been a mere sport for a minor demiurge who calls himself God. His creatures pass their lives in a state of agitated ignorance until given the apple of knowledge by Lucifer, whereby they learn that they are playthings, victims, animated for the amusement of a higher power. The sum of their life on earth is pain. To countermand God, the Devil provides them with the liberating gift of death. God, in turn, retaliates with gifts of illusion to keep them alive. The most potent of these illusions is Love.
>
> The play does not delight the spectators. They break it up and overturn the stage.

If I were to claim that the above was an outline for a film scenario never written, there is scarcely a knowledgeable reader who would not assume that its author was Ingmar Bergman. In fact it is the summary of a work by August Strindberg, the epilogue to his second *(verse)* version of *Master Olof* (1877). That Bergman read and/or saw this play and henceforth adopted not only the message but the form of its epilogue for his own purposes, with no previous attraction towards such subject matter, is far from my intention to suggest. I trust I have made clear that Bergman's compulsion to question God, fear the Devil, confuse each with the other and with parental authority had arisen early in his life. I simply find it to be a striking coincidence that this play-as-annex-to-a-play should so markedly bear the accent of Bergman's preoccupations. Since numerous coincidences of this sort may be disclosed, I want briefly to engage the Strindberg confluence (a better term than "influence") because it *is* crucial—briefly, since it is so obvious. To hunt for analogies, in the plays and films of Bergman, with the plays, stories and biographies of Strindberg may well become a future assignment for those who write Ph.D theses to prove what is baldly evident to everyone else; it will be like demonstrating the presence of Bergson in Proust or classifying the ironies in Thomas Hardy. It is too easy. Given the person-

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alities, the circumstances and the interests of these two men, it would only be surprising if there were *no* visible resemblances in their work! All the same, the principal life-gestures of each are so startling in their similarity that one is tempted to believe in the operation of the uncanny: either that or to suspect Bergman of *willing* himself to repeat every stage of Strindberg's distraught, creative journey.

Both Strindberg and Bergman were brought up in an atmosphere of Swedish Lutheranism which all but smothered them, against which they reacted militantly and from which they were unable to liberate themselves. It has been carelessly pointed out that Strindberg's final plays show him to have been in quest of God, whereas Bergman in his later phase is busy rejecting Him. Yet we have all read Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven." To flee Him down the nights and down the days is to acknowledge that there is a Him from whom to flee!

Both Strindberg and Bergman are notorious for the self-crucifying ambivalence of their relationships with women. We need not pretend astonishment or superiority (pardonably, we may laugh out loud from time to time!); their problems in that direction are far from being unique. What *is* unique, or at least what imposes itself in the art-forms of each man is the overbearing intensity with which he has expressed the problem: August Strindberg, with misogyny almost unsurpassed, Bergman with a degree of solicitation so morbid as to make us wonder if it might not conceal a secretly rooted enmity.

Both Strindberg and Bergman wrote principally for the theatre (speaking broadly, film is theatre); hence, they were encouraged by the medium, even more than would have been the case if they had been primarily writers of novels, to appeal *to an audience* for vindication of their agonies and at special moments of stress to *advertise* themselves, if not directly in the plays and films, by way of manifestoes, program notes, essays for the defense, court proceedings, interviews, public belligerence toward the critic—whatever. Traditionally, drama has been the most *impersonal* mode of fiction. Strindberg, more than anyone before George Bernard Shaw, made it an instrument of the ego. And Bergman shares with Fellini and Jean-Luc Godard the dubious distinction of having transformed the most public of the arts into

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a confessional lined with mirrors. Both Strindberg and Bergman exercised their talent in a country obdurately disinclined to listen to either of them until largely forced to do so by foreign critical attention. However, Bergman's struggle is in no way comparable to that of Strindberg—neither for recognition nor in any other area—and the deduction then follows that unconsciously Bergman would have *preferred* to have Strindberg's miseries, obstacles and provocations in order to ratify the volume of his protests. Among many ironies that Bergman is unlikely to perceive is that he behaves like a genius who has been wantonly neglected, while actually he has probably had more attention paid to him than any personage in the history of movies except Charles Chaplin and Greta Garbo! Finally—I had better say *recently*—Bergman's transition, around 1960, to a type of "chamber-music" film, increasingly subjective and, from time and setting, dislocated, bears a close resemblance to Strindberg's terminal sequence: forms of theatre which only with difficulty the theatre could contain, forms which baffled his contemporaries even more than his preceding output, forms in which he enshrined the antipathies, fears and self-aggrandizements of a lifetime.[7]

To return to the Strindberg item I summarized above (I could have chosen any of a dozen equally apt): my belief is that since Bergman must have been aware of that epilogue long before entering theatre himself it probably *confirmed* a tendency already distinct in his preferences. If you are sympathetically addicted to a special treatment of the human estate in art—in Bergman's case the Morality and its related forms—and if you arrive at the brink of professional life with a pronounced attitude towards its contradictions for which you are seeking the appropriate vehicle, you will naturally find encouragement in the fact that a great predecessor has "anticipated" your own proclivities. At the same time I am not *minimizing* the presence of Strindbergian echoes in Bergman's work. For the first ten years of his career it is impossible to avoid. What I believe to be more interesting than his annexation of any given motif in Strindberg is the adroitness with which he eventually turned it to personal account and the stages by which he liberated

[7] "*The Dream-Play* was followed by a series of what one is tempted to call 'scream-plays.'" F. L. Lucas, *The Drama of Ibsen and Strindberg* (London: Cassell, 1962).

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himself from the dependence (from the presence, never; from dependence, yes). The omnipresence of the Devil (or his surrogates) in Bergman's world is a more complex business. To rest content with the explanation that he retained a conventional element from a fearsome childhood experience and thereafter simply played sets of variations is far too ingenuous. In a statement Bergman made in 1958, he recurred to that childhood story, with a fresh emphasis on one of its components.

> The devil was an early acquaintance, and in the child's mind there was a need to personify him. This is where my magic lantern came in. It consisted of a small metal box with a carbide lamp—I can still remember the smell of the hot metal—and coloured glass slides: Red Riding Hood and the Wolf. . . . And the Wolf was the Devil, without horns but with a tail and a gaping red mouth, strangely real yet incomprehensible, a picture of wickedness and temptation on the flowered wall of the nursery.

If he had already made the Devil's acquaintance (in the frescoes of country churches), why was there further "a need to personify him" (indeed, to substitute him for the wolf), especially if he represented "wickedness and temptation"? Without cavil, we can all answer that, up to a point: evil is attractive because it is vivid. And if he was prepared to make capital of the creature with his magic lantern, why was he so upset when faced with the same Wolf in Alf Sjöberg's youthful production of the tale? (The short answer may be that Sjöberg's wolf was more grandiose, hence inducing a traumatic shock!) Actually, the question is necessarily rhetorical, for one can never be sure if Bergman has not unconsciously re-arranged the sequences in his growing-up to make their progression more dramatic. All of us are histrionic some of the time. . . .

One thing at least is clear: the growing Bergman was less anxious to banish the Devil than to incorporate him, to *visualize* him—a strategy whereby moral discomfort was remedied by aesthetic adjustment. There followed a nearly life-long *compulsion,* which first assumed *public* shape when, in his early twenties, Bergman created, for a series of sketchy stories he published in minor magazines, a "Jack" figure, suggested by Jack the Ripper. This "Jack" appeared again, at the crime-serial level, in his first film; then, still so named, as the author's *alter ego* in his

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second play (prepared but not produced, in 1943). Naive in its conception and in its stagecraft, if one may judge from the available synopses, *Jack Among the Actors*[8] is a more important thematic crucible than *Kaspar's Death,* for it introduced the Merger Principle (of God and Devil) which, whatever its personal origin, was to supply Bergman with a crude dualistic cosmology in nearly all his early efforts for theatre and film.

Kaspar (the Swedish name for Punch) and Jack are now combined as Jack Kasparsson. This character, young and damned evidently, joins a theatre troupe supervised by a "director" whom none of the company has ever met. Finally confronted with this awesome personage, at the end of the play, Jack asks him, apprehensively, if he is not God. "Why not?" counters the Director. "I thought it wouldn't be a bad idea to control things, create a little world for a few people. . . . You must admit that I've succeeded." Jack nervously agrees that he has, indeed. The Director preens.

> And I have sat there pulling the strings. . . . And the people have hopped and danced like puppets for my amusement. . . . I'm a unique director. . . . But everybody is a little bit of a director and has his own little stage. The difference is that I am unusually human. . . . If there is or ever has been a God, he was a criminal. You people pitifully cry out, "God is kind!" Like a call for help because you know there is no God! I think He committed suicide when He saw what a universe He had created. . . . Well, I shall die soon. But I was great while I lived. Great! Powerful! I shall be remembered by many. I was their God and their Devil. I was great and I was ugly. . . . Good night—my friend!

Jack is left alone on an ominously darkening stage, with thunder and lightning that increase as Jack cries out his last imploring speech.

> God in Heaven, help me! *You who must be somewhere.* . . . you must help me . . . not because I deserve help, not for any reason except that I can't stand it. . . . *Help me to find a way out.* Let it be lighter so that I can see something and understand![9]

[8] The play was rehearsed for production at Student Theatre, but for some reason there was a change of programming and another piece by Bergman was presented instead, a sketch called *Tivolit* of which I have a synopsis so shadowy it is not worth passing along. *Jack Among the Actors* was never professionally staged.

[9] These are my versions of extracts given by Frederic Fleischer in an article, "Early Bergman" (*Encore,* March-April 1962, London), and by Fritiof Billquist in *Ingmar Bergman* (Stockholm, 1960).

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The numerous transformations and fissions involved here are quite extraordinary. First, Bergman creates a half-devil figure, Jack: then he confronts him with a "Director" who plays God (recall that Bergman, himself, had played a God-character in *Outward Bound,* which he directed). The director next announces that God is dead and leaves Jack to his doom. A creature half-God, half-Devil, by his own boast, functions finally as Death. Confused theology it appears to be and it recurs, with variants, early and late in Bergman's *oeuvre.* In a more articulate guise it may be seen in *The Seventh Seal,* where the Knight also addresses his questions to Death.

We should try to distinguish, whenever possible, a theatrical solution from a private strategy. For the moment I am trying to uncover the provenance of Bergman's flirtation with the diabolic, not his sophistication of it in his matured art. Something of the psychological sequence may be inferred. The climax of Bergman's creeping disbelief in divine mercy which had so shattered his teleology at the age of nineteen was evidently too dismaying for him to bear without drastic editing. Throughout his growing years, he has confided, he was recurrently visited by sensations of utter nothingness, as if a great black emptiness were settling around him. Among sensitive natures who feel their egos threatened by a neutral immensity (or by a universe of rivals) this is not an unusual visitation. The feeling is naturally amplified by the shock of a major frustration, by a crisis of guilt or by the loss of someone loved. Typically, the experience precedes a religious conversion (or reversal) or an access of creative energy. Luther's fit in the choir and Dostoievsky's first epileptic attack are spectacular instances of a condition otherwise not uncommon. D. H. Lawrence has described, with beautiful simplicity, an ordeal of this nature (at a later age than that of Bergman's conflict) which followed the death of his mother.

> Then, in that year, for me everything collapsed, save the mystery of death, and the haunting of death in life. I was twenty-five, and from the death of my mother, the world began to dissolve around me, beautiful, iridescent, but passing away substanceless. Till I almost dissolved away myself and was very ill: when I was 26.
> Then slowly the world came back: or I myself returned; but to another world. . . . I used to feel myself at times haunted by something, and a little guilty about it, as if it were an abnormality. Then the

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haunting would get the better of me, and the ghost would suddenly appear, in the shape of a usually rather incoherent poem.[10]

And for Bergman, one might add, the ghost would appear in the shape of a rather incoherent play or movie. Meanwhile, unable to live with the absence of God—therefore with Nothing—he substituted the active presence of Satan. The next step, if despair was to be effectually routed, was to *identify* himself with the demon, to make him in any case his familiar—an authentic Lutheran solution if one remembers how vividly the great Protestant testified to seeing devils perched on his window-sill and at the foot of his bed. Bergman has certainly employed this *persona* in excess of the sanction given either by Lutheran idiosyncracy or artistic license; for years he signed his name with a small fork-tailed devil beneath it! As late as 1960 he was still expressing, if with forced jocularity, a fellow-feeling for the creature (in *The Devil's Eye* and in Stravinsky and Auden's *The Rake's Progress,* which he staged in 1961).

Again, the shadow of Strindberg looms on the wall of Bergman's cave. That troubled soul complained constantly of the Powers *(makterna)* by which he was importuned (no passing metaphor; under stress he felt them to be bodily present)—but there is good reason for presuming that he was not altogether averse to their company. It should not be conjectured, however, that Strindberg and Bergman had simply inherited the obsessions, together with the theology, of Martin Luther. One assumes there are thousands of Lutherans who go through life unencumbered with secret-sharers. My conviction is that the Devil was invoked by them both as a psychological defense against despair, a conviction fully confirmed by Sigmund Freud's discourse on this subject. The substance of his theory, as it applies here, is that the Devil presents himself as a saviour when the anticipated rewards of faith and virtue are seen to be groundless. If devotion to an inscrutable Good yields nothing but anguish, relief is immediate when the opposite allegiance is adopted, since the favors of the Devil can be savored without delay—and tokens of his rule are everywhere apparent. In the language of psychoanalysis the Devil is the *suspended* super-ego, that part of the individual which

[10] From a rejected preface. See *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence* (London: William Heinemann, 1936; reprint, 1961).

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permits him to violate the precepts of the *active* super-ego. In the religious context that super-ego is God. And if God, following the inferences of Freud and certain schools of cultural anthropology, was originally an exalted version of the father,

> It requires no great analytic insight to divine that God and the Devil were originally one and the same, a single figure split into two bearing opposed characteristics. . . . *The father is thus the individual prototype of both God and the Devil.* The fact that the figure of the primal father was that of a being with unlimited potentialities of evil, bearing much more resemblance to the Devil than God, must have left an indelible stamp on all religion (my italics).[11]

That it left an indelible stamp on Lutherans there is no gainsaying. (Russell Hope Robbins alludes to them, in his encyclopedia, as "devil oriented" and amusingly points out that in Luther's Greater Catechism the Devil is named 67 times, Christ only 63.) If we find the Freudian argument persuasive (obviously I do), we can with it more satisfactorily account for the histrionic role played by the Devil in Bergman's psychic life: like those dark powers of Strindberg (and somewhat more successfully) it warded off, even if it did not expel, the forces of dread. In neither man would the super-ego remain "suspended." Strindberg, after circling close to insanity and toying with the notion of entering a monastery, turned in his last years to a protracted and unavailing journey towards Damascus. Bergman, having played God definitively (by recreating the miracle—in *The Virgin Spring*) and having surrendered the Devil to the status of a joke, has relapsed into a more bereft state than before, fumbling in the dark for that split image which will convey, with final authority, the schizophrenia of modern man.

There would be no pleasure in having pursued this line of inquiry if my object were merely reductive. The psychoanalyst asks what the raw material of hallucination has done to his patient (and from whence did it come). The critic asks what the artist has done with the raw material of hallucination. Ingmar Bergman's evolution as an artist does not, as I see it, include a "cure"; it simply brings his art to the stage where the silence of God and the insolence of the Devil are raised from prosaic levels of antithesis to the dignity of poetic metaphor.

[11] Sigmund Freud's personal exploitation of the Devil is analyzed by David Bakan in *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (D. Van Nostrand, 1958). My quotation is taken directly from Mr. Bakan's excellent synthesis of this subject.

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ZULFIKAR GHOSE

In the Desert

When grandma took me to Quetta
the train cut through sugarcane
and maize fields across the Punjab
and entered the Thar desert.

I stood at the window for hours
and watched the sand of the desert
meet the sandy beach of the sky
where the heat-haze broke in waves.

It was the first time that I'd seen
a world in which there seemed
nothing to live for and nothing
with which to keep one alive.

I had a fantasy as children do
of being alone in the desert
and lasting there for no longer
than a drop of water.

I stood at the window for hours
and wanted to know for how long
the world as far as I could see
would continue completely empty.

Now thirty years later when I look back
on that journey through the desert
I feel I am still at the window
searching the horizon for plants.

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D. J. ENRIGHT

Board of Selection

No, it is not easy to effect an
Appointment in English literature.
The chairman of the board is worrying over
Last year's riots (the bodies were traced
By the smell . . .) and next year's budget
(The British are pulling out . . . but leaving
Their literature behind them).

The dean of the faculty is an
Economist of repute and utility.
But what is the difference, he asks,
Between prose and poetry?
The candidate proposes adroitly that
Poetry is more economical than prose,
Viz., it says as much in half the space.

The economist is not satisfied.
In half the space, he muses . . . but
It takes him four times as long to understand
A piece of poetry as a piece of prose—
Which means . . .

The board make hasty calculations . . .
Which means that poetry is a false economy,
More haste, less speed.
The chairman remembers he has to build a nation
By the end of the month.

Neither I nor the candidate dare ask the
Esteemed economist which particular piece of
Poetry has so discomfited him.
It would probably have to do with daffodils
And this is an orchid-exporting country.
We submit that quite a lot of literature is
Prose and prose is pertinent to the economy.

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A business man wants to know when the
Middle Ages stopped and the Renaissance started.
No one is sure. The director of education
Asks why there is so much sex in modern literature.
Because, the candidate ventures, there is so much
In modern life (excluding the English department).
The chairman is brooding over the birth-rate.

Finally, after a disgruntled pilgrimage to
Canterbury and a brief stopover in 1984,
It is recommended that the candidate be offered
A temporary assistant lectureship at the bottom
Of the scale, subject to the survival of the
Economy, the nation, the university, the department,
And her hopes of completing her master's degree.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

The Ogre at the Feast of Life

JOHNSON'S REPUTATION IS DEADLY, and these volumes[1] of his essays and autobiographical fragments don't offer much evidence against it. Of all the great literary figures, he is in his own work the least read from mere curiosity and the most effectively mutilated by his academic keepers, who smack their lips over the soundness of the bullying old eccentric of the moral essays, quarantine Boswell with labels like "libidinous puppy" (along alleys, on deserted bridges, in boudoirs, even burning penitently with the clap, the young Scotsman couldn't get enough of London whores and actresses), and never blink at the unbridled despondencies with which the Christian Doctor flattens any residual hopefulness in the utterly damnable human race:

> The depravity of mankind is so easily discoverable, that nothing but the desert or the cell can exclude it from notice. The knowledge of crimes intrudes uncalled and undesired. They whom their abstraction from common occurrences hinders from seeing iniquity, will quickly have their attention awakened by feeling it. Even he who ventures not into the world, may learn its corruption in his closet. For what are treatises of morality, but persuasives to the practice of duties, for which no arguments would be necessary, but that we are continually tempted to violate or neglect them? What are all the records of history, but narratives of successive villanies, of treasons and usurpations, massacres and wars?

Though a pale ray may now and then penetrate his megrims, it hardly alters the atmosphere of exanimate platitude:

> That familiarity produces neglect, has been long observed. The effect of all external objects, however great or splendid, ceases with their novelty: the courtier stands without emotion in the royal presence; the rustic tramples under his foot the beauties of the

[1] THE YALE EDITION OF THE WORKS OF SAMUEL JOHNSON. Yale University Press. Volume I: DIARIES, PRAYERS, AND ANNALS, ed. by *E. L. McAdam, Jr.* with *Donald* and *Mary Hyde*. $10.00. Volume II: THE IDLER AND THE ADVENTURER, ed. by *W. J. Bate, John M. Bullitt,* and *L. F. Powell*. $12.50. Volumes III, IV, and V: THE RAMBLER, ed. by *W. J. Bate* and *Albrecht B. Strauss*. $35.00 for set of three volumes.

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spring, with little attention to their colour or their fragrance; and the inhabitant of the coast darts his eye upon the immense diffusion of waters, without awe, wonder, or terror.

—down, down to the lowest circle of bathos:

That every day has its pains and sorrows is universally experienced, and almost universally confessed; but let us not attend only to mournful truths; if we look impartially about us we shall find that every day has likewise its pleasures and its joys.

If, really, we look impartially about us, nothing in "our present state" will serve. "Of riches," declares Johnson, "as of every thing else, the hope is more than the enjoyment" (one of the Rambler's or Idler's multitudinous generalizations on which "Speak for yourself" is the appropriate comment). Pleasure? there's nothing in it: "Such is . . . [its] emptiness . . . that we are always impatient of the present. Attainment is followed by neglect, and possession by disgust; and the malicious remark of the Greek epigrammatist on marriage may be applied to every other course of life, that its two days of happiness are the first and the last." Indeed he goes so far as to make a statement of such stunning ignorance that, even neglecting to remind Johnson of the fact of laughter, the libidinous puppy or one of those obliging actresses could have corrected it any night in the world:

Pain is less subject than pleasure to caprices of expression. The torments of disease, and the grief for irremediable misfortunes, sometimes are such as no words can declare, and can only be signified by groans, or sobs, or inarticulate ejaculations. Man has from nature a mode of utterance peculiar to pain, but he has none peculiar to pleasure, because he never has pleasure but in such degrees as the ordinary use of language may equal or surpass.

Sometimes the fear of the world (as well as, in this instance, a recollection of Swift) contracts into a strong metaphor:

It is well known, that, exposed to a microscope, the smoothest polish of the most solid bodies discovers cavities and prominences; and that the softest bloom of roseate virginity repels the eye with excrescences and discolorations. The perceptions as well as the senses may be improved to our own disquiet, and we may, by diligent cultivation of the powers of dislike, raise in time an artificial fastidiousness, which shall fill the imagination with phantoms of turpitude, shew us the naked skeleton of every delight, and present us only with the pains of pleasure, and the deformities of beauty.

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And just once, unintentionally, the moralist's rhetoric of rejection knots itself up into an agonized indictment of a God whose only guarantee to mankind is posthumous:

> It is scarcely to be imagined, that Infinite Benevolence would create a being capable of enjoying so much more than is here to be enjoyed, and qualified by nature to prolong pain by remembrance and anticipate it by terror, if he was not designed for something nobler and better than a state, in which many of his faculties can serve only for his torment, in which he is to be importuned by desires that never can be satisfied, to feel many evils which he had no power to avoid, and to fear many which he shall never feel: there will surely come a time, when every capacity of happiness shall be filled, and none shall be wretched but by his own fault.

Boswell calls him "The Sage"; but impersonal judiciousness, sustained and moderate reflection, prudence and resource with their comfortable aphorisms (*à la* his remarkably different transatlantic contemporary, Benjamin Franklin), Christian or at least stoic submissiveness to the will of God and the nature of things —all the traits answerable to what the Enlightenment, of which Johnson was England's most illustrious representative, identified as wisdom—are in neither his character nor his writing. No renunciatory and expiatory metaphysic is large enough for him; he suffers pain and terror unrelieved by the consolations of philosophy; he is burdened, not as he thinks by the guilt and self-hatred whose pious names he borrows from the eighteenth-century remains of Christian dogma, but by the sense of unused capacity ("there will surely come a time, when every capacity of happiness shall be filled, and none shall be wretched but by his own fault"), the personal sense of waste and loss, the immoderateness of desire, the weight of his inapplicable talents and passions.

Johnson's preoccupation in the essays is not so much religious or moral as hydrostatic: his most personal imagery is less of sin and penance than of filling and killing time, of voids and the hope of repletion. "Such things . . . as other philosophers often attribute to various and contradictory causes," according to Mrs. Thrale, "appeared to him uniform enough; all was done to fill up the time. . . . One man, for example, was profligate and wild, as we call it, followed the girls, or sat still at the gaming-table.

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'Why, life must be filled up (says Johnson), and the man who is not capable of intellectual pleasures must content himself with such as his senses can afford.' " A favorite word of Johnson's is "vacuity": about riches (as elsewhere about every other human preoccupation), he remarks (in *The Idler* Number 73) that "we find them insufficient to fill up the vacuities of life." If Johnson were more religious or more moral, his essays would be considerably livelier. Nor is it his sesquipedalian propensities that damage them: the Johnsonian style is much less an unabridged-dictionary creature than used to be alleged: so preposterous a passage as this (from *The Rambler* Number 20)—". . . when from the adscititious happiness all the deductions are made by fear and casualty, there will remain nothing equiponderant to the security of truth. . . ."—is hard to find. The prevailing defect of the style is its gross and very personal exaggeration of the eighteenth-century notion that style, at the height of the civilized elegance which the Augustans felicitated themselves on having achieved, is merely the more or less shapely vessel of thought. Since for Johnson the public moralist all serious thought is a reminder of entropy and the end of the world, he does everything he can to excogitate and adorn, the more mechanically and tautologically the better, a structure of statement that will disguise the anarchic desperation of the contents:

> The general voice of mankind, civil and barbarous, confesses that the mind and body are at variance, and that neither can be made happy by its proper gratifications, but at the expence of the other; that a pampered body will darken the mind, and an enlightened mind will macerate the body. And none have failed to confer their esteem on those who prefer intellect to sense, who controul their lower by their higher faculties, and forget the wants and desires of animal life for rational disquisitions or pious contemplations.

The very idea of desire can't be risked; it is so perilous that Johnson surrounds it with tattered blankets of allegory and mythological metaphor:

> Nothing is more fatal to happiness or virtue, than that confidence which flatters us with an opinion of our own strength, and by assuring us of the power of retreat precipitates us into hazard. Some may safely venture further than others into the regions of

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> delight, lay themselves more open to the golden shafts of pleasure, and advance nearer to the residence of the Sirens; but he that is best armed with constancy and reason is yet vulnerable in one part or other, and to every man there is a point fixed, beyond which if he passes he will not easily return. It is certainly most wise, as it is most safe, to stop before he touches the utmost limit, since every step of advance will more and more entice him to go forward, till he shall at last enter the recesses of voluptuousness, and sloth and despondency close the passage behind him.

No epigram would have seemed more pernicious to Johnson than Blake's "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." Johnson requires no advice to be excessive: he is all appetite, incapable of restraint except by absolute suppression. "Every thing about his character and manners," says Boswell, "was forcible and violent; there never was any moderation; many a day did he fast, many a year did he refrain from wine; but when he did eat, it was voraciously; when he did drink wine, it was copiously. . . ."

> When at table, he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks seemed rivetted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite, which was so fierce, and indulged with such intenseness, that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible. To those whose sensations were delicate, this could not but be disgusting; and it was doubtless not very suitable to the character of a philosopher, who should be distinguished by self-command. But it must be owned, that Johnson, though he could be rigidly *abstemious,* was not a *temperate* man, either in eating or drinking. He could refrain, but he could not use moderately. He told me, that he had fasted two days without inconvenience, and that he had never been hungry but once. They who beheld with wonder how much he eat upon all occasions when his dinner was to his taste, could not easily conceive what he must have meant by hunger . . .

Johnson is an unhappy ogre at the feast of life. His appetite appalls the other guests and soon enough himself; its inordinateness is the guarantee of its ultimate failure; excess as much as abstinence is a *memento mori:*

> . . . as we advance forward into the crowds of life, innumerable delights sollicit our inclinations, and innumerable cares distract

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> our attention; the time of youth is passed in noisy frolicks; manhood is led on from hope to hope, and from project to project; the dissoluteness of pleasure, the inebriation of success, the ardour of expectation, and the vehemence of competition, chain down the mind alike to the present scene, nor is it remembered how soon this mist of trifles must be scattered, and the bubbles that float upon the rivulet of life be lost for ever in the gulph of eternity. . . .

At the edge of eternity, within a month of his death, seventy-five years old, the victim of a paralytic stroke, suffering from asthma and dropsy, constipated, tormented by insomnia, barely able to walk, even then he cannot be moderate or simply yield: for recreation he drives out in a friend's coach ("I struggle hard for life," he writes to Dr. Burney. "I take physick, and take air; my friend's chariot is always ready. We have run this morning twenty-four miles, and could run forty-eight more. *But who can run the race with death?*"); "such was his intellectual ardour even at this time," says Boswell, "that he said to one friend, 'Sir, I look upon every day to be lost, in which I do not make a new acquaintance'; and to another, when talking of his illness, 'I will be conquered; I will not capitulate' "; alone, he doses himself ferociously with a whole pharmacopoeia of emetics, cathartics, and narcotics, administers enemas to himself often several times daily, and in his "Sick Man's Journal" in Latin ("medical treatises should be in Latin") notes everything—dosages, food and drink, quantity of urine, quantity and quality of stool, amount of sleep, apparent changes in the state of his mind and body (together at last!).

"His figure was large and well formed," says Boswell, "and his countenance of the cast of an ancient statue; yet his appearance was rendered strange and somewhat uncouth, by convulsive cramps. by the scars of that distemper which it was once imagined the royal touch could cure, and by a slovenly mode of dress. He had the use only of one eye; yet so much does mind govern and even supply the deficiency of organs, that his visual perceptions, as far as they extended, were uncommonly quick and accurate. So morbid was his temperament, that he never knew the natural joy of a free and vigorous use of his limbs: when he walked, it was like the struggling gait of one in fetters; when he rode, he had no command or direction of his horse, but was carried as if in a balloon." Mrs. Thrale reports that he told her husband once "that he had never sought to please till past thirty years old, con-

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sidering the matter as hopeless." "With all possible . . . delicacy" Boswell states that Johnson's "conduct, after he came to London, and had associated with Savage and others, was not so strictly virtuous, in one respect, as when he was a younger man. It was well known, that his amorous inclinations were uncommonly strong and impetuous." Boswell "never knew a man laugh more heartily"; "I have known him at times exceedingly diverted at what seemed to others a very small sport": he and Boswell learned that a friend of theirs had had a will drawn by a lawyer they were visiting, and Johnson

> . . . laughed immoderately, without any reason that we could perceive, at our friend's making his will; called him the *testator,* and added, "I dare say, he thinks he has done a mighty thing. He won't stay till he gets home to his seat in the country, to produce this wonderful deed: he'll call up the landlord of the first inn on the road; and after a suitable preface upon mortality and the uncertainty of life, will tell him that he should not delay making his will; and here, Sir, will he say, is my will, which I have just made, with the assistance of one of the ablest lawyers in the kingdom; and he will read it to him (laughing all the time). He believes he has made this will; but he did not make it: you, Chambers, made it for him. I trust you have had more conscience than to make him say, 'being of sound understanding'; ha, ha, ha! I hope he has left me a legacy. I'd have his will turned into verse, like a ballad." . . .
>
> Mr. Chambers did not by any means relish this jocularity upon a matter of which *pars magna fuit,* and seemed impatient till he got rid of us. Johnson could not stop his merriment, but continued it all the way till we got without the Temple-gate. He then burst into such a fit of laughter, that he appeared to be almost in a convulsion; and, in order to support himself, laid hold of one of the posts at the side of the foot pavement, and sent forth peals so loud, that in the silence of the night his voice seemed to resound from Temple-bar to Fleet-ditch.

He was immobilized and irrepressible. Boswell notes that Johnson "feared death, but he feared nothing else, not even what might occasion death. . . . One day, at Mr. Beauclerk's house in the country, when two large dogs were fighting, he went up to them, and beat them till they separated; and at another time, when told of the danger there was that a gun might burst if charged with many balls, he put in six or seven, and fired it off against a wall. Mr. Langton told me, that when

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they were swimming together near Oxford, he cautioned Dr. Johnson against a pool, which was reckoned particularly dangerous; upon which Johnson directly swam into it. He told me himself that one night he was attacked in the street by four men, to whom he would not yield, but kept them all at bay, till the watch came up, and carried both him and them to the roundhouse." Saying that Johnson "feared death, but . . . nothing else," Boswell momentarily forgets—what was well known among their circle of friends—that Johnson feared madness also: indeed there is evidence, in a letter by Johnson (in French!) to Mrs. Thrale and in some guarded remarks she confides to her diary, that her responsibility, when Johnson while residing in her home anticipated an onset, was to chain and manacle him in his locked room, enforce this "confinement and severity" (as she referred to it) with a whip, and keep the keys till he felt able to trust his faculties again. At every age he was a man of unaccommodatable passions: "How many Times," exclaims Mrs. Thrale in her diary, "has this great, this formidable Doctor Johnson kissed my hand, ay & my foot too upon his knees!" When he wrote his reluctant farewell letter to her—he was seventy-four—he wrote like the brokenhearted lover he was as he thanked her for "that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched."

If he had been Dickens or Dostoevsky, he would have written disorderly melodramatic triple-decker novels brimming with incidents from the common life that was as much his element as theirs. Instead he wrote poets' biographies as austere as lighthouses, eighteenth-century poems and occasionally superb eighteenth-century criticism, an epochal dictionary, a brilliantly annotated edition of Shakespeare (in which, without questioning Shakespeare's primacy, Johnson was the last and most astute English critic to suggest that the "licentiousness" of Shakespeare's diction didn't necessarily contribute to the unshackled expressiveness of the English language), moral essays and romances rather too categorical and funereal even for the taste of the time, and he spent his life in other people's drawing-rooms talking unstoppably into the night: " 'I lie down (said he) that my acquaintance may sleep; but I lie down to endure oppressive misery, and soon rise again to pass the night in anxiety and pain.' By this pathetic manner," comments Mrs. Thrale, "he used to shock me

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from quitting his company," which he made "exceedingly entertaining when he had once forced one, by his vehement lamentations and piercing reproofs, not to quit the room, but to sit quietly and make tea for him, as I often did in London till four o'clock in the morning."

The strangest fact of all about Johnson is that he is a character in other people's books. Our sense of his unprecedented magnitude depends on vivid and particular accounts by others, who—themselves figures bounded by their somewhat complacent century—could not have known how far his life was from being the exemplary eighteenth-century life they must have been convinced it would seem to an admiring posterity. If the vain and shrewd Mrs. Thrale hadn't pampered the famous old man and noted him down in the very pulsations of his nature—

> To recollect . . . and to repeat the sayings of Dr. Johnson, is almost all that can be done by the writers of his life; as his life, at least since my acquaintance with him, consisted in little else than talking, when he was not absolutely employed in some serious piece of work; and whatever work he did, seemed so much below his powers of performance, that he appeared the idlest of all human beings; ever musing till he was called out to converse, and conversing till the fatigue of his friends, or the promptitude of his own temper to take offence, consigned him back again to silent meditation.

—if (in a book immeasurably greater than the collected works of its subject) Boswell had not recorded him triumphantly talking away on every one of the world's questions in a thousand drawing-rooms, if all that remained of him was his writing, then we might make clever guesses at his personal virtues and shortcomings and even concede his idiosyncratic greatness but we would not begin to imagine how prodigious a phenomenon we had missed.

His marvelous powers of conversation are, in his formal writing, confined and often smothered by the self-mortifying compulsion to set down not personal casualty but, as his contemporaries and his conscience saw it, universal truth. In the tiny fragment, written in his sixties, of a memoir of his childhood, he tantalizes us with intimations of what he might have written if he hadn't been the lifelong prisoner of himself:

> This Whitsuntide, I and my brother were sent to pass some time at Birmingham; I believe, a fortnight. Why such boys were sent to

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> trouble other houses, I cannot tell. My mother had some opinion that much improvement was to be had by changing the mode of life. My uncle Harrison was a widower; and his house was kept by Sally Ford, a young woman of such sweetness of temper, that I used to say she had no fault. We lived most at uncle Ford's, being much caressed by my aunt, a good-natured coarse woman, easy of converse, but willing to find something to censure in the absent. My uncle Harrison did not much like us, nor did we like him. He was a very mean and vulgar man, drunk every night, but drunk with little drink, very peevish, very proud, very ostentatious, but, luckily, not rich. At my aunt Ford's I eat so much of a boiled leg of mutton, that she used to talk of it. My mother, who had lived in a narrow sphere, and was then affected by little things, told me seriously that it would hardly ever be forgotten. Her mind, I think, was afterwards much enlarged, or greater evils wore out the care of less. . . .
>
> In making, I think, the first exercise under Holbrook [his schoolmaster], I perceived the power of continuity of attention, of application not suffered to wander or to pause. I was writing at the kitchen windows, as I thought, alone, and turning my head saw Sally dancing. I went on without notice, and had finished almost without perceiving that any time had elapsed. This close attention I have seldom in my whole life attained.

"A story is a specimen of human manners," he said to Mrs. Thrale, "and derives its sole value from its truth." The glow of his memoir is in its relying solely on the truth, with which in this instance art or calculation seems to have nothing to do.

Truth is the first test of everything: "Johnson was known to be so rigidly attentive to it," says Boswell, "that even in his common conversation the slightest circumstance was mentioned with exact precision. The knowledge of his having such a principle and habit made his friends have a perfect reliance on the truth of every thing that he told, however it might have been doubted if told by many others. As an instance of this, I may mention an odd incident which he related as having happened to him one night in Fleet-street. 'A gentlewoman (said he) begged I would give her my arm to assist her in crossing the street, which I accordingly did; upon which she offered me a shilling, supposing me to be the watchman. I perceived that she was somewhat in liquor.' This, if told by most people, would have been thought an invention; when told by Johnson, it was believed by his friends as much as if they had seen what passed."

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The important truth is the truth of human manners: to a friend commenting on the beauty of the landscape through which they were traveling, Johnson retorted that "a blade of grass is always a blade of grass,[2] whether in one country or another: let us if we *do* talk, talk about something; men and women are my subjects of enquiry; let us see how these differ from those we have left behind." According to Mrs. Thrale,

> . . . no kind of conversation pleased him less I think, than when the subject was historical fact or general polity. "What shall we learn from *that* stuff (said he)? let us not fancy like Swift that we are exalting a woman's character by telling how she
>
> Could name the ancient heroes round,
> Explain for what they were renown'd, &c."
>
> I must not however lead my readers to suppose that he meant to reserve such talk for *men's* company as a proof of pre-eminence. "He never (as he expressed it) desired to hear of the *Punic war* while he lived: such conversation was lost time (he said), and carried one away from common life, leaving no ideas behind which would serve *living wight* as warning or direction." . . .
>
> I asked him once concerning the conversation powers of a gentleman with whom I was myself unacquainted—"He talked to me at club one day (replies our Doctor) concerning Catiline's conspiracy—so I withdrew my attention, and thought about Tom Thumb."
>
> Modern politics fared no better. . . . In the year 1777, or thereabouts, when all the talk was of an invasion, he said most pathetically one afternoon, "Alas! alas! how this unmeaning stuff spoils all my comfort in my friends conversation! Will the people never have done with it; and shall I never hear a sentence again without the *French* in it? Here is no invasion coming, and you *know* there is none. Let the vexatious and frivolous talk alone, or suffer it at least to teach you *one* truth; and learn by this perpetual echo of even unapprehended distress, how historians magnify events expected, or calamities endured; when you know they are at this very moment collecting all the big words they can find, in which to describe a consternation never felt, for a misfortune which never happened. Among all your lamentations, who eats the less? Who sleeps the

[2] Johnson's one functioning eye was very myopic, and not in any case qualified to do much distinguishing between one blade of grass and another. During a visit to a country estate, Johnson was "taken out to walk in the garden. The master of the house, thinking it proper to introduce something scientifick into the conversation, addressed him thus: 'Are you a botanist, Dr. Johnson?' 'No, Sir, (answered Johnson,) I am not a botanist; and, (alluding, no doubt, to his near sightedness) should I wish to become a botanist, I must first turn myself into a reptile.' "

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worse, for on general's ill success, or another's capitulation? *Oh, pray* let us hear no more of it!"

He was a great, good, kind, loving, companionable man. Once when Miss Helen Maria Williams, "an elegant and accomplished young lady," was in his company, "he asked her to sit down by him, which she did, and upon her inquiring how he was, he answered, 'I am very ill indeed, Madam. I am very ill even when you are near me; what should I be were you at a distance?' " Boswell

> . . . was surprised at his talking without reserve in the publick post-coach of the state of his affairs; "I have (said he,) about the world I think above a thousand pounds, which I intend shall afford Frank [his servant] an annuity of seventy pounds a year." Indeed his openness with people at a first interview was remarkable. He said once to Mr. Langton, "I think I am like Squire Richard in *The Journey to London, 'I'm never strange in a strange place.'* " He was truly *social*. He strongly censured what is much too common in England among persons of condition,—maintaining an absolute silence, when unknown to each other; as for instance, when occasionally brought together in a room before the master or mistress of the house has appeared. "Sir, that is being so uncivilised as not to understand the common rights of humanity."

He loved and needed his hosts of friends more continuously and more intensely than any of them could love and need him in return; he loved women often for themselves and always as the special consolation of men; he loved children[3] and the young ("you have at least a chance for virtue till age has withered its very root"); he had himself been miserably poor for many years, and

> . . . loved the poor [observes Mrs. Thrale] as I never yet saw any one else do, with an earnest desire to make them happy.—What signifies, says some one, giving halfpence to common beggars? they

[3] "The remembrance of what had passed in his own childhood made Mr. Johnson very solicitous to preserve the felicity of children; and when he had persuaded Dr. Sumner to remit the tasks usually given to fill up boys' time during the holidays, he rejoiced exceedingly in the success of his negociation, and told . . . [Mrs. Thrale] that he had never ceased representing to all the eminent schoolmasters in England, the absurd tyranny of poisoning the hour of permitted pleasure, by keeping future misery before the children's eyes, and tempting them by bribery or falsehood to evade it. 'Bob Sumner (said he), however, I have at length prevailed upon: I know not indeed whether his tenderness was persuaded, or his reason convinced, but the effect will always be the same.' . . ."

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only lay it out in gin or tobacco. "And why should they be denied such sweeteners of their existence (says Johnson)? it is surely very savage to refuse them every possible avenue to pleasure, reckoned too coarse for our own acceptance. Life is a pill which none of us can bear to swallow without gilding; yet for the poor we delight in stripping it still barer, and are not ashamed to shew even visible displeasure, if ever the bitter taste is taken from their mouths." In consequence of these principles he nursed whole nests of people in his house, where the lame, the blind, the sick, and the sorrowful found a sure retreat from all the evils whence his little income could secure them . . .

The strongest essays by this Christian Tory, who thunderously supported rank and subordination, are devoted to attacking capital punishment, parental tyranny, vivisection, war and other conflicts about property, debtors' prisons; advocating the abolition of imprisonment for debt, he doesn't hesitate to hold the creditor more culpable (because impelled by meaner vices) than the debtor:

It is vain to continue an institution, which experience shews to be ineffectual. We have now imprisoned one generation of debtors after another, but we do not find that their numbers lessen. We have now learned, that rashness and imprudence will not be deterred from taking credit; let us try whether fraud and avarice may be more easily restrained from giving it.

Swift's *saeva indignatio* is more noticed, but Johnson's indignation has none of the misanthropy and self-congratulation of Swift's. Johnson's has always an unencumbered straightforwardness of motive, as when in the greatest book review ever written he assesses the silliness of the "philosopher" Soame Jenyns, who in his *Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* derived a system of benignant universal hierarchy from Pope's *Essay on Man* ("Whatever is, is right"):

That hope and fear are inseparably or very frequently connected with poverty, and riches, my surveys of life have not informed me. The milder degrees of poverty are sometimes supported by hope, but the more severe often sink down in motionless despondence. Life must be seen before it can be known. This author and *Pope* perhaps never saw the miseries which they imagine thus easy to be born. The poor indeed are insensible of many little vexations which sometimes imbitter the possessions and pollute the enjoyment, of the rich. They are not pained by casual incivility, or

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mortified by the mutilation of a compliment; but this happiness is like that of a malefactor who ceases to feel the cords that bind him when the pincers are tearing his flesh.

Nor will this champion of subordination accept Jenyns' view that education is not for the poor:

> Though it should be granted that those who are *born to poverty and drudgery* should not be *deprived* by an *improper education* of the *opiate* of *ignorance;* even this concession will not be of much use to direct our practice, unless it be determined who are those that are *born to poverty*. To entail irreversible poverty upon generation after generation only because the ancestor happened to be poor, is in itself cruel, if not unjust, and is wholly contrary to the maxims of a commercial nation, which always suppose and promote a rotation of property, and offer every individual a chance of mending his condition by his diligence. Those who communicate literature to the son of a poor man, consider him as one not born to poverty, but to the necessity of deriving a better fortune from himself. In this attempt, as in others, many fail and many succeed. Those that fail will feel their misery more acutely; but since poverty is now confessed to be such a calamity as cannot be born without the opiate of insensibility, I hope the happiness of those whom education enables to escape from it, may turn the ballance against that exacerbation which the others suffer.
>
> I am always afraid of determining on the side of envy or cruelty.

And Johnson's indignation clarifies the shape and mass of his style into pure kinetic energy when, sardonically examining Jenyns' supposition that human suffering is justifiable because it is the will of superior beings to whom we are as animals are to us, he concludes with a fantasia on the theme of human fatuity:

> As we drown whelps and kittens, they amuse themselves now and then with sinking a ship, and stand round the fields of *Blenheim,* or the walls of *Prague,* as we encircle a cock-pit. As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business or pleasure, and knock him down with an apoplexy. Some of them, perhaps, are virtuosi, and delight in the operations of an asthma, as a human philosopher in the effects of the air pump. To swell a man with a tympany is as good sport as to blow a frog. Many a merry bout have these frolic beings at the vicissitudes of an ague, and good sport it is to see a man tumble with an epilepsy, and revive and tumble again, and all this he knows not why. . . .
>
> One sport the merry malice of these beings has found means of

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> enjoying to which we have nothing equal or similar. They now and then catch a mortal proud of his parts, and flattered either by the submission of those who court his kindness, or the notice of those who suffer him to court theirs. A head thus prepared for the reception of false opinions, and the projection of vain designs, they easily fill with idle notions, till in time they make their plaything an author . . .

The ogre who ate up Jenyns skin, bones, and all was not—though Jenyns must have thought he was[4]—one of those superior beings who invent and savor human suffering. He was not even a mortal proud of his parts. His powers, though they repelled evil and affectation and illuminated the world for everyone who knew him, could not exorcise his fear of the vengeance of God:

> I have now begun the sixtieth year of my life. How the last year has past I am unwilling to terrify myself with thinking. This day has been past in great perturbation. I was distracted at Church in an uncommon degree, and my distress has had very little intermission. . . .

Twelve years later, another birthday prayer commemorated "a life radically wretched":

> I have forgotten or neglected my resolutions or purposes [which] I now humbly and timorously renew. Surely I shall not spend my whole life with my own total disapprobation. Perhaps God may grant me now to begin a wiser and a better life.
>
> Almighty God, my Creator and Preserver, who hast permitted me to begin another year, look with mercy upon my wretchedness and frailty. Rectify my thoughts, relieve my perplexities, strengthen my purposes, and reform my doings. Let encrease of years bring encrease of Faith, Hope, and Charity. . . .

It would never have occurred to him that he had in fact done enough, he could not help remembering how much had been promised and how much left undone in the terrifying range of his powers.

[4] Jenyns waited thirty years—till after Johnson's death!—for his revenge. "Some time after Dr. Johnson's death," says Boswell in a footnote, "there appeared in the newspapers and magazines an illiberal and petulant attack upon him, in the form of an Epitaph, under the name of Mr. Soame Jenyns, very unworthy of that gentleman, who had quietly submitted to the critical lash while Johnson lived. It assumed, as characteristicks of him, all the vulgar circumstances of abuse which had circulated amongst the ignorant. It was an unbecoming indulgence of puny resentment, at a time when he himself was at a very advanced age, and had a near prospect of descending to the grave."

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Bounding "Lycidas"

If in fact a great many critical differences which seem to involve literary principles are based simply on differing definitions of the literary object, that would be a comforting thought. If something could then be done to clarify the outlines of what we're talking about (perhaps only by enumerating the options), it's conceivable that our critical differences might be made to appear less portentous. A good place to try out this thesis is "Lycidas," where we shan't have much trouble agreeing that the poem is, at a minimum, a statement of 193 lines and 1,477 words, plus its title, plus the name of its author, John Milton. Without straining anyone's credulity, we may advance a little further, and say that the poem extends further than the words on the printed page of *Justa Edovardo King* and the sounds they symbolize. It makes explicit reference to, and therefore incorporates within itself, various facts about John Milton, Edward King, and the natural world as a whole. For example, the third verse paragraph and the appearance of "Camus, reverend sire" among the mourners make no sense at all if we are not aware that the two men attended the same university and had previous acquaintance. St. Peter's words are senseless if we do not know that King had a position within the Church. We have to know some West Country geography, some rudiments of Old English history; when the great vision of the guarded mount looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold, we have to have some sense of what he is looking for or guarding against. We have to be able to perceive, at least imaginatively, the state of the English church as Milton in 1637 envisaged it. Briefly, the poem is an act performed within a historical penumbra which it partly creates, partly presupposes, and thus, between these two processes, somehow evokes. Since we know a good deal about Milton's biographical circumstances (for example, that he hadn't written as much poetry as he thought he should have), some part of that biographical penumbra too is incorporated in the poem itself. It is perfectly legitimate to think that Milton chose to emphasize Lycidas' character as a poet (about which

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there is remarkably little overt comment in the other poems of *Justa Edovardo King*)[1] because of pervasive anxieties about his own vocation and immediate future. And if he had not been an ascetic young man with an exalted view of the poetic vocation, who had written ardent Latin elegiacs but not an English word on the subject of love, we might give Amaryllis and Neaera quite other values than we traditionally do.

The poem "Lycidas" further exists within, and implies knowledge of, the several mythological and religious systems from which its individual words and concepts derive their significance. "Arethusa" isn't simply a bare word on a page, it's a mythological story with overtones which may be pursued to no distinct terminus through Ovid and his Renaissance exegetes, into the whole knotty, intertwined question of what a mythological fable "means" and where it originated. "Phoebus" and "amaranth" must also be understood in terms of traditional lore; and unless one knows the expectations, implications, and emotional reverberations surrounding "the dear might of Him that walked the waves," that part of the poem can be nothing but empty noise to its reader. Less clear-cut but no less significant is the relation between the various religious-mythological systems (the pervasive recollections of Druidism probably entitle us to count three of them) which exist side by side within the poem. These relations are nowhere categorically defined, and Doctor Johnson was shocked by the indecency of their juxtaposition. The potential for that shock is part of the poem; so is the potential for other responses, from admiration for ingenuity to lyrical appreciation of Milton's wide-ranging vision. Perhaps we can think of the relation between the systems as a semi-void, defined partly by choice of details, partly by positioning within the poem (so that the specifically Christian symbols appear climactically), and partly left blank. Into this blank the reader can project any ethical or

[1] Those other poems do indeed talk a good deal about Apollo and the Muses, and occasionally complain about absent dolphins who should have been on hand to help the new Arion, but the most explicit (and moving) statement associating King with poetry comes from one R. Mason:

> Quoties (memini) ille benignam
> Porrexit mihi saepe manum, si forte recentem
> Materiam in Musis dederim! quam lene serenus
> Riserit, argutos ducens in carmina nutus!

—and this passage cast King in the role of indulgent critic rather than active poet.

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esthetic response he thinks appropriate; and the blank itself is an actively functioning part of the poem.

Indeed, even less distinct traditions must be considered part of the poem. The general category "a pastoral poem" arouses in the knowing reader a distinct set of expectations which the specific poem "Lycidas" in some measure satisfies and in some measure frustrates, disappoints, defies. The pastoral is a poem traditionally set in Arcadia, with Arcadian props. Milton has some of these props—the oat, the sheep, the names "Lycidas," "Damoetas," and so on; but his poem is also set in England, making persistent reference to specific features of English geography, English landscape, English flora and fauna. No relation between these two spatial poles is ever categorically defined. Arcadia is timeless or primitive, and so, in part, is Milton's poem; but it has other elements which are specifically of 1637, like the drowning of a Cambridge clergyman in the Irish sea, an attack upon hirelings in the English church, a covert reference to Roman Catholicism as a grim wolf. The poem's fulfillment or frustration of the expectations we have based upon its genre—these are part of its energies, part of its nature as a poem. Neither is the poem's stanza form a naked metrical fact; it is a thing we experience under color of customs, in the light of which it is either traditional or innovative. When Milton left ten lines unrhymed, or interspersed an occasional trimeter, the measure of shocked surprise or quiet acceptance which he thereby incorporated in his poem is a part of the poem. It is just as much a part of the poem as are the connotations of the various words he used. (One of them, "scrannel," is a very odd word indeed; Milton was using it for the first time in English literary history. That makes it a different word, poetically, having a considerably different effect, than if it were being used for the hundredth or thousandth time.) With regard to the structural peculiarities of the poem, we may not know for sure whether shocked surprise or quiet acceptance is a proper response; but it is very much our business to be aware of that response, precisely because it alters the very nature of the poem we are supposed to be reading. Literary history and structural criticism between them must work it out for us.

Again, when Milton "framed" one end of the poem in the idyll of the last eight lines, but not the other end, the front, he achieved

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an effect which clearly has varied widely from reader to reader—ranging from total impercipience, to quiet acceptance, to quiet surprise, to a sense that Milton here was truculently asserting his private personality. As a verbal gesture, this hiatus between lines 185 and 186 is there to be perceived, whether any particular reader perceives it or not, or thinks it worth calling attention to. It is part of the poem, as all the decorums which the poem either violates or fulfills are part of the poem, and such a part of the poem as one does not have to be perverse to recognize.

On the other hand, the number of "r's" in the poem is also a fixed figure, but it is not properly a part of the poem, because only a perverse reader or one indifferent to properly poetic effects would add up the letter "r's" or even think of them as a separate category. The fact that there are 11 verse paragraphs, 13 trimeter lines, 10 unrhymed lines, and 11 pentameter lines containing 10 separate words—these are facts which have some bearing on the poem as a structure of effects. Conceivably, a very ingenious critic might demonstrate a specially patterned use of the letter "r" which could be related to a specific literary effect. (I presume this very unlikely demonstration only for the sake of the argument.) Then the letter "r's" become a part of the poem in the sense that a purely random statistical compilation—for example, the ratio of words beginning with "A" to lines beginning with "T"—is not. The test here is not the reader's consciousness of the relationship in question; there may be very potent patterns of relationship within a poem, of which the reader in the act of reading is altogether, and necessarily, unconscious. The test, rather, is a cause-effect relationship of which the critic must convince his fellows; the proof of the pudding is in the continuing critical symposium.

"Lycidas" then, is a statement by a pastoral speaker and by John Milton, the two speakers being unclearly related, and the very existence of the "uncouth swain" being with-held till the end of the poem. Time and place of the statement are several times indicated, but to contrary effect, so that no unequivocal decision can be reached. The audience is nowhere defined; it is the buyers of *Justa Edovardo King*, it is a generalized literary audience, it is prince posterity, it is anyone. Considered in its own right, the statement concerns the death of a shepherd named Lycidas or a Cambridge clergyman named King; let us call these a couple of

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natural statements. But it also has philosophic import; it concerns life, death, fame, redemption, the rewards of virtue, and the meaning of existence. For several obvious reasons, the absolute limits and total significance of this statement cannot be defined in precise terms. The statement is interrupted by several dramatic spokesmen, who express themselves from a vantage point which is sometimes ill defined, on closely related but not identical topics, and to somewhat different effects. The statement as a whole deals with several different subjects, the relative importance of which may be variously estimated; and, most importantly, its message is framed in such elliptical and metaphorical language, its statements are of such large and vague significance, that an exact formulation is almost out of the question. About its detailed character and progression there has not, to my knowledge, been much dispute, so I need not summarize here the pattern of questions, answers, and assertions which constitutes its poetic embodiment. Suffice it to say that the natural and proper method of showing forth this philosophical meaning is by a prose paraphrase which makes explicit innuendos, implications, and emphases which are tacit in the original text. It is probably unnecessary to add that criticism has now accumulated a great many of these paraphrases —all of which, however much they agree in the details, vary notably in their overall judgment of the poem's central concern or ultimate statement or largest assertion.

For when it departs from the printed page and enters the mind of a specific reader, the poem is immediately and necessarily surrounded by still another sort of penumbra. "Lycidas" becomes, in the process of imaginative perusal, an individual fantasia, a structure of attitudes, responses, and sentiments built upon the skeleton structure of Milton's notation (those 193 lines, those 1,477 words). To this set of notations each reader brings, perforce, nothing less than his whole experience of life—a full orchestra of instinctual needs, an awareness of grief, loss, natural sympathy, and Christian reconciliation—as well as of poetry, Puritanism, and the English language. In this sense, every death of a young and promising man may become, for a reader of "Lycidas," part of the poem; as every subsequent pastoral elegy adds to the resonance of its tonalities. Obviously there are immediate dangers in the indulgence of these peripheral associa-

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tions. Some of them may be blatantly incongruous with the tone and theme of Milton's poem. (Once in the way of reading line 12, "He must not float upon his watery bier" in the context of the local tavern-keeper, one may well find it a hard habit to break.) Even when they are perfectly congruous, even when they deepen and enrich the poem for the individual reader, the associations may well seem so far in excess of Milton's actual notations as to make one's reading of "Lycidas" appear sentimental. After all, we deal, in "Lycidas," with a publicly defined literary object, which, however many analogues it may have with other literary objects or with life itself, is distinct from these analogues. The test of their relevance is in the end their power to be absorbed within the proportioned structure of the poem as Milton scored it. How big the poem itself is we may not be able to say with finality; it is to be suspected there will always be "ample" and "meagre" reading of "Lycidas," as of Schubert. But the complaint against sentimentality is usually its disproportion; and against this failing we can guard fairly well with a modicum of common sense and some respect for the text as actually written.

In this way we shade off from the "core" poem toward its implications and overtones; and how far we proceed from center to periphery before drawing the line between "Lycidas" and the implications of "Lycidas" not only determines in good measure the sort of poem we think it is, but is itself determined by what sort of harmonies and discords appear to be available/inevitable within each successive view. A conclusion which leaves each man free to sit under the shade of his own "Lycidas" is doubtless the safest of all. But criticism can scarcely be content with so slack a relativism; and so we have seen various efforts to make one element of "Lycidas" control or limit the others, to make a primary "Lycidas," surrounded perhaps by secondary "Lycidases," in tributary roles of varying intimacy. And this in effect is what has been proposed in a well-known essay called "Five Types of Lycidas," by my former colleague and (I hope) still-friend, M. H. Abrams. His paper was first delivered before the Columbia Graduate Union in 1957, and is reprinted in C. A. Patrides' little paperback anthology[2] of critical essays about "Lycidas"; and the criterion he sets up is this:

[2] *Milton's Lycidas: Tradition & Form* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961).

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> The best interpretation is the one among the interpretations at present available which provides the best fit to all the parts of the poem in their actual order, emphases, and emotional effects, and which is in addition consistent with itself and with what we know of Milton's literary and intellectual inheritance and his characteristic poetic procedures (p. 230).

What this tells us, in effect, is that the best interpretation of "Lycidas" takes account of everything in the poem and is not inconsistent with anything relevant outside it. As an abstraction, there's nothing much to be said against this. But when we read Mr. Abrams' account of what "Lycidas" is really about, it turns out to concern the "natural" referents (a shepherd's lament for Lycidas, Milton's lament for King) plus a modicum of philosophic statement. Everything else is in one way or another subordinate and secondary.

Now what does it mean to say that a structural interpretation of this sort "provides the best fit to all the parts of the poem in their actual order, emphases, and emotional effects"? We can't dispute much about the order of the poem's parts (whether words or lines or sections); though it might be pointed out that Mr. Abrams himself reads the poem from back to front, by beginning with the fact that it's the speech of an unnamed rustic singer. Properly speaking, he doesn't and we don't have the slightest reason to suspect this till the end of the poem; and if we're going to talk about the "actual order" of the poem, this is a fact of some significance.[3]

But as for the "actual emphases" and "actual emotional effects," aren't these precisely the questions at issue? If we know what the actual emphases and actual emotional effects of a poem are, why do we need to interpret it any further? Interpretations of poems exist, one had always supposed, precisely to enable us to discover what the actual emphases and emotional effects are. It really isn't clear how one can ground the interpretation on the thing it's supposed to discover.

I propose that it's arbitrary and even misleading to take the discursive structure of Milton's poem as the essential thing about it—except provisionally. There are many important things one

[3] The withholding of the "uncouth swain" till the end of the poem militates, for one thing, against a "dramatic" reading of it; we can't suppose it's the lament of one figment of Milton's fictional imagination for another, if we have no reason to suspect the existence of the first. The argument is expanded below.

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can see from this point of view, but there are a good many others that one can't. I find that the gaps and incoherences of a man like Milton (whom we can all see to be architecturally minded) are the most interesting things about him; and it's precisely these that Mr. Abrams' "structural" reading smooths over—reconciling John Milton to the pastoral speaker (as if the discovery of the latter weren't a shock!), reconciling the England of 1637 to timeless Arcadia, reconciling paganism to Christianity, reconciling St. Peter's fury to Christian consolation, reconciling Milton's pervasive concern with himself to his concern for a formalized ritual statement, mentioning all the decorums Milton fulfilled but none of those he violated—till a poem which, for me, is shaking with antagonisms mastered and disparities violently overcome becomes for him a large smooth structure of commonplace. What I miss most of all is a sense of the energy which the poem generates from its disparities. To take only a single instance: because he felt more energy, more passion in the poem than Milton could be supposed to have felt for King, Professor Tillyard proposed that Milton's elegy is in part an elegy for himself. Mr. Abrams dismisses this self-regarding latency by saying that the poem expresses the passion of an unnamed speaker for Lycidas—i.e., of one figment of Milton's imagination for another. This wouldn't be unthinkable, if Milton were a dramatic author, like Shakespeare, who readily took on the personality and emotional coloring of a variety of characters. But in fact he wasn't; as a rule when he deals with shepherds (in "Comus" and "Epitaphium Damonis") they're apt to be pretty wooden shepherds; and the uncouth swain is less than wooden, he's nebulous, he doesn't even exist till the poem is all over. So that to say "Lycidas" is a passionate poem because the uncouth swain cares about his friend is to repeat the problem as an answer to itself—and to eliminate one major source of incongruity and energy.

More generally, when we say that a poem's logical structure is primary and other elements are to be admitted only to the degree that they are "consistent with" that structure, we're in serious danger of forgetting that literary energy, like political energy, sometimes displays itself as impressively against structures as within them. "Lycidas" provides a nice instance, in that much-admired verse paragraph which begins, "Where were ye nymphs,

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when the remorseless deep / Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?"

The nymphs thus evoked are undefined creatures; and because the previous lines have been discussing Lycidas as a singer and companion of other shepherds, one tends at first to suppose them merely female associates of Lycidas, at most Arcadian patronesses of the pastoral profession. Thus it comes as a rather startling enlargement of the word "Nymphs" to learn that they are goddesses associated with the magic and mystical places of West Britain, and that the Druids were formerly their bards. One notes with some curiosity that Milton's associations with Druids and their "nymphs" were not particularly agreeable. *The History of Britain* describes them, rather testily, as "a sort of priests or magicians" given to quarrels of theological ambition and tolerant among their flock of "a lewd adulterous incestuous life"—"progenitors," Milton concludes abruptly, "not to be glori'd in." And in describing somewhat later (out of Tacitus), the assault of Suetonius Paulinus on Mona (Anglesey), he describes with evident distaste how many women appeared, "like furies running to and fro in dismal habit with hair loose about their shoulders (and) torches in their hands." But the Roman general encouraged his followers "not to fear a barbarous and lunatic rout," and so began the attack. As a result of the Roman victory, the Druids were "yok'd with garrisons, and the places consecrate to their bloody superstitions destroi'd. For whom they took in war they held it lawful to sacrifice; and by the entrails of men us'd divination."

I cite these testy remarks on Druids from one of Milton's testier pieces of prose merely to show that shaggy Mona (i.e., before its groves were razed by the civilized and sceptical barbarity of Suetonius Paulinus) and the barbarians who invented stories about Deva's wizard stream carry altogether different overtones in "Lycidas" than in Milton's prose writings. Not only so, they enter at a striking tangent to the main line of the poem's statement—actually in process of saying where the Nymphs *weren't* while Lycidas was drowning. The implication is that they might have been expected to be there, supervising the operations of a magic universe, but were poignantly absent. And our sense of loss at the departure of these picturesque and perilous errors transforms it-

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self into that question of devastating, monosyllabic, colloquial flatness:

> Ay me, I fondly dream!
> Had ye been there—for what could that have done?

Especially after the somewhat formalized "neither . . . nor . . . nor" construction of the previous lines, the flatness of the monosyllabic line reverberates with the emptiness of despair. It is picked up now in a question which seems syntactically and logically merely to carry the despair further:

> What could the Muse her self that Orpheus bore,
> The Muse her self for her inchanting son
> Whom Universal nature did lament,
> When by the rout that made the hideous roar
> His goary visage down the stream was sent,
> Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

"The muse her self" (a new but also more primitive meaning for "Nymph"), in being repeated holds back the assertion—creating thereby, even while it seems that an assertion of futility is being repeated, and deepened, an undercurrent of buried excitement. "For her inchanting son" introduces the central figure but only indirectly; the next line tells the consequence of his fate, the next one still the agent of it, while the full force of the action is released only in the incrementally repeated "down the stream" and "down the swift Hebrus." "Was sent" is a careful circumlocution for the ugly act of dismemberment; yet the pouring, tumbling motion of the river, imitated in the piling of clause upon intermitted clause, acts as a tremendous release in answer to the holdup of the question and its qualifiers. The obvious answer to the first question, "What could that have done?" is simply, "Nothing." But the repetition of this question in the form of a question about the Muse (though it still implies the answer "Nothing") affirms (and exemplifies in its surge of energy) an actual miracle, the power of poetry to be reborn even in celebrating the death of the poet. That is, it makes a subterranean, symbolic connection with the basic theme of the elegy, the magic power of poetry to overcome death. And throughout the passage that magic word "inchanting" with its richness of connotation

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("charms," "songs," "incantation") infuses its reverberant and mysterious overtones.

What, we ask, is the source of the power in this passage? Some will say the invocation of the prophetic archetype Orpheus. No doubt he does things to all of us—but nowhere else anything quite like this. Perhaps Milton's sense of the splendor and antiquity of the poetic vocation enters into the passage; no doubt it does. The Miltonic syntax exercises its familiar double action, of extension and control; the Miltonic organ music is heard in all the richness of multiple inner-rhymes. But however we define them, it's perfectly apparent that the sources of the passage's poetic power have little or nothing to do with its logical assertions. Paraphrased, the passage says something like, "Where were the nature-nymphs who might have protected Lycidas? Nowhere near; and even if they had been, they couldn't have helped him, for Calliope couldn't help her son Orpheus." But underneath this there goes a counter-assertion which runs something like this: "The powers of poetry are wild and primitive and dangerous powers—perilous to all forms of law and good sense and civilized order; but they can make dead men rise and live and be remembered from remotest antiquity." It seems to me that the power and harmony of the passage come from these two strikingly opposed tendencies working against one another; and that it's idle to talk of one element being primary and the other secondary. The sense of release we get from this passage comes precisely, I would argue, from the power of the latent to declare itself against the overt meaning. It's true that they defy logical unification; all this means is that the unity one is trying to understand and proclaim has to be conceived as the poem's unity of effect, not the critic's unity of systematic understanding. The poem is unified, not as a structure of statements about the universe, or as a sequence of themes which fit naturally together, but as a momentary and fragile balance of centrifugal and centripetal forces within the reader's mind. For a poem is as synthetic as a perfume; its ingredients aren't just superimposed, like the courses of a pyramid, they interfuse and oppose and subvert and interpenetrate one another from every direction. The great poem, such as "Lycidas," has some anarchy in it which not only threatens, but really overturns from time to time the common sense which (perhaps nec-

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essarily, and no doubt advantageously) predominates in the poem's structure.

Probably the search for a single controlling theme or statement in every poem, to which all other elements shall be subordinate, springs from a conviction about the value of "unity" to a literary composition—a conviction which we don't really have to challenge, as long as we remain vividly aware of the many different ways in which subordinate forces can relate to the "unifying" principle. They can oppose as well as sustain it; they can use it as a pretext and a shield, behind which to advance audacious and perhaps only half-understood insinuations; they can subvert and parody it. What's for sure is that the controlling theme needn't exert on the poem's subordinate elements any schematic or mechanical influence. It may, and often does, control in the rather chairmanly sense that it represents the average direction of the scrimmaging images and ideas in the poem; but for all that, the energies it expresses come from elsewhere, are exerted against or through it, and are the things we have to deal with as directly as possible if we want to understand what's going on.

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Edgar Degas

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1969 the Louvre brought together in the Orangerie all the Degas drawings, paintings, and sculpture belonging to it and normally housed in the Jeu de Paume and the Cabinet des Dessins. The resulting exhibition of almost three hundred works provided insights into the work of Degas of a depth and range not possible since the last large Orangerie exhibition of 1937. If it was, as some critics pointed out, deficient in the latest and greatest of Degas' achievements, that lack was more than compensated by the opportunity of seeing large early compositions—*Semiramis, Scènes de Guerre au Moyen Age,* and the Bellelli family portrait—surrounded by literally dozens of preparatory studies for each of them. As with most such large exhibitions, confrontation with actual works in quantity exploded many myths surrounding the artist's name, the principal myth under attack in this case being that of Degas the classic draftsman.

Almost every discussion of Degas' draftsmanship links his name with that of Ingres and, partly because of Degas' expressed respect for the older master and his works, he is inevitably seen as the foremost, or even sole, proponent of Ingresque draftsmanship in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The accepted lineage is that Ingres begat Flandrin who begat Lamothe who begat Degas.[1] The works, however, even the earliest, announce otherwise and show that Degas was from the start at best a hesitant draftsman in the Ingresque sense. Ingresque line is the perfection of the neo-classical line seen in the work of Flaxman and others in the early nineteenth century which always functions as contour, as the boundary between one object and another or between an object and its surrounding space. In the work of Ingres that line is not only the two-dimensional equivalent of a three-dimensional edge but assumes in itself a flowing, pleasing character—an abstract beauty—which refers more to canons of formal esthetic perfection than to perceived reality. Thus the single line becomes of paramount importance, the one continuous mark made by the pencil on the paper which follows the graceful and controlled gesture of the hand of its creator. The real inheritor of this tradition of draftsmanship in the later nineteenth century was academicism, most notably in the form of Art Nouveau.

Degas' line, on the other hand, was almost never beautiful in itself, nor was it ever very successful as defining edge. Instead, it was a line

[1] To take an example almost at random, Emmanuel Fougerat has recently called Degas "le plus classique des dessinateurs."

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that functioned increasingly as tone and one that from the outset had to be seen not as a single stroke but as a group of strokes—as shading. Because of this, it was a line that gave relief and implied the three-dimensional continuation of form beyond and behind the viewer's field of vision, not one that functioned as a metaphor for the difference between two represented objects—a connecting rather than a discriminatory line. It is to be seen as early as the conventional student drawing of a horse from a classical frieze in which the contour is established first and parallel strokes of shading are added around it to give relief. Although this drawing, which may have been the starting point for the horse in the *Semiramis,* is a conventional enough academic exercise, it is evident that Degas' strength is not in the contour but in the shading. Later studies for the *Semiramis* confirm this, especially the magnificent drapery study for the crouching figure in the foreground. Small as this study is, it has a monumentality that sets it far above the more "linear" figure studies, and shows where Degas' passion lay. In this study line means nothing by itself; everything is in the tonal variation, which is so subtly handled as to give a granite-like substantiality to the drapery. Sometimes, as in this study, Degas added wash around the drawing to heighten the relief. More frequently, he worked over a wash or on colored paper, which not only heightened the relief but established a middle tone from which he could work both up and down, simplifying the development of the tonalities. Perhaps the greatest achievements among these early drawings are the studies of race horses, in which shading is manipulated to evoke the animals' silky hides with a mastery seldom equalled before or since. It was not for nothing that Bernard Berenson thought simultaneously of Degas and Leonardo, for Degas' manner of parallel shading to evoke plasticity is perhaps the closest modern equivalent to that of Leonardo.

There is no better illustration of Degas' insufficiency as a classic draftsman than the etching and aquatint *Mary Cassatt au Louvre,* which was exhibited at the Orangerie in a magnificent impression on slightly blue-tinted paper. Even allowing for the difficulties imposed by working on a varnished copper plate, Degas' contour is awkward, even clumsy, to a degree unthinkable for a competent classic draftsman. What makes the print such a masterpiece, and gives it its great strength, is the vigor and subtlety with which the aquatint is applied. The composition would stand—might even be improved—had it been executed entirely in aquatint. And, indeed, with the passage of time Degas gradually suppressed defining contours to the point where, in a picture such as the large study of dancers in the Phillips Collection, they dwindled to a few strokes in an otherwise tonally conceived composition. More important, he was able to marry draftsmanship and color through the medium of pastel and thus achieve colored tonal variations that allowed him at once to establish the solid three-dimensional form he always sought and to create colored surfaces of the

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greatest richness. He said of these late works that in them he had become a colorist with line, but it was a statement the formulation of which revealed his perpetual longing for the perfection of classical form. In fact, he had become the opposite, a draftsman with color. The encrusted shadings of the late pastels gave to draftsmanship a new meaning wholly different from that known to Ingres, in whose work line is the boundary of color. In the Degas pastels line *is* color, as well as shading and modulation, and has, above all, a connecting rather than a separating function. This is apparent even in the late figure drawings in black crayon, in which the line serves to create the most highly charged series of divisions possible on the surface of the paper, drawing the entire sheet together into a unified composition with its awkward configurations. That Degas achieved this without sacrificing a sense of volume is an index of the mastery he finally achieved.

Related to the development of Degas' draftsmanship is the problem of the creation of pictorial space. It is clear that in the beginning Degas tried desperately to hollow out a viable traditional constructed perspective space. In the *Semiramis,* and in smaller works such as the double portrait at Dumbarton Oaks, the lines of such a constructed space are actually ruled onto the canvas. In the *Semiramis,* the attempted space is of such complexity as to daunt an older and more conventional talent, with views opening down, to the side, and into the far distance. For Degas, who was ultimately incapable of such constructions, it was impossible. Not one of his early "machines," the large multi-figure compositions so beloved of the Salon, is finished. Even more perplexing for Degas than the space itself, however, was the relationship between the figures and the space they were meant to inhabit. In the *Semiramis* the figures are clustered together and arranged like a sculptured frieze. Their relationship to each other and to the constructed space in which they are set—notably that of Semiramis herself—is ambiguous. And, as in a frieze, the figures seem always to be threatening to push out of the canvas leaving their background behind. Degas' backgrounds gradually closed up, becoming flat areas of dark color in the portraits, areas the density of which exerted even greater pressure on the figures. To combat this, Degas resorted to punching holes in the backgrounds, usually in the form of windows, as in the double portrait of himself and Evariste de Valernes. Sometimes he extended the space backward with a mirror, as in the Bellelli portrait, but this introduced a complicating ambiguity. In the end he accepted the flattening tendency that was increasingly apparent in his work and held his three-dimensional figures within their pictorial space by increasing emphasis on the surface, an emphasis which exerted counter-pressure from the picture plane inward. This surface emphasis was achieved through the tactile richness of the pastel itself and through various compositional devices such as viewing subjects from sharply oblique angles and choosing subjects, like dancers on the stage,

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that were lit in such a way as to flatten their form. As his pastel color became stronger and the tonal variations greater, and as the increasing range and subtlety of those gradations encouraged a reading of his pictures as surface modulation rather than as extreme depth, this latter device gradually disappeared. By all these means, Degas managed to work with an increasingly shallow picture space while maintaining the integrity of the picture plane, and it is a measure of his synthetic mastery that he never surrendered the solidity of represented form that he so valued.

One ancillary but interesting device that Degas used to enhance the flatness of his pictures was the construction of his own frames. The conventional Rococo-style frames in which late nineteenth-century pictures were and are usually exhibited accomplishes two things. By a series of recessive moldings it creates an artificial perspective—a window frame—through which the picture is seen and which pushes it back into space. By an elaborate open-work border it relieves the visual weight of these moldings, modulating them to the wall surface by evaporating the frame around the edges, rather in the manner of crockets on a Gothic building. In both cases, it serves to establish the picture as something distinct from the wall. In order to integrate picture and wall more firmly, to maintain the planarity of his picture surfaces, and to imply a lateral extension rather than one in depth, Degas developed a relatively narrow, slightly convex reeded molding with which he framed many of his pictures. Those that he put on black and white drawings were generally white, those on pastels colored, most often a grayed blue or green that modulated between the color of the pastel itself and the color of whatever wall it might be exhibited against. That the wall color was also important to Degas we know from the fact that he chose to paint his gallery at the Sixth Impressionist Exhibition yellow. The absolute appropriateness of these frames to his pictures was forcefully demonstrated in the Orangerie exhibition by the added impact of the two pastels that had them, a bather and the double portrait of Halévy and Cavé. The frames worked with rather than against the planarity of the compositions, and reaffirmed what even Degas' severest critics have allowed about his supreme taste in esthetic matters.

The insufficiency of Degas' classical draftsmanship and his inability at managing elaborate spatial constructions raise fundamental questions about his art. It is clear that an artist of genius is capable of accomplishing what he chooses and that if, therefore, there are areas of incompetence in his art they result from strong internal necessity, from conscious or unconscious choice, rather than from simple disability. Degas' "incompetence" seems to witness a more than usually unresolved conflict between duty and desire. Duty, in this case, understood as fidelity to a known and masterable style based on accepted canons—an academic style—with all the security such fidelity im-

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plies. Certainly, this temptation to academicism runs through all of his early work and persists to the end in his unwillingness to surrender three-dimensional form. But Degas was too great an artist not to be able to be in and of his time, not to have to recognize the importance of the path Manet was blazing, and it is his willed desire to assimilate and master contemporary problems that gave rise to conflict. The development of his art is the visual record of that conflict and of his constant search for reconciliation and accommodation. For this reason, almost everything he created was an essay, an experiment, rather than what his contemporaries would have thought of as a finished work, and his oeuvre taken as a whole is the graphic record of a process, not a series of finished statements. Only in the last few years of his creative life did Degas develop an artistic instrument—a style—sufficiently refined and powerful to allow him to create works of the finished monumentality he had sought at the outset of his career, and by then the terms of that monumentality had wholly changed. Only then had he developed his sculpture—the only truly modernist sculpture of the nineteenth century—to the point where it carried the burden of his three-dimensional explorations, leaving him free in his pastels to experiment with color and tone, color as tone, or, most accurately, drawing as color and tone.

In a curious way, Degas' development prefigures the development of modern art during the years of Cubism, and one is occasionally struck by the fact that he never arrived at collage, particularly as he was given to technical experiments of the most complex sort. Although such an absolute departure from traditional procedure would probably have been impossible for him, he tried something like it in his sculpture and did, in fact, develop a manner of working that approximates the methods of collage. Nearly every figure, every motif in Degas' work can be traced back to observations made in his younger days, mostly in Italy. From this initial store of images, largely copies after Classical and Renaissance works, almost every later image can be derived. In the course of time these initial images became so re-worked, so transformed, so constantly altered by reference to immediate reality, that they were apt to be all but unrecognizable. It is this method of selection and re-selection, combination and re-combination, that comes as close as Degas was able to the methods of collage. This is perhaps most obvious in some of the earlier pictures, notably in such a one as that in the McIlhenny collection sometimes known as *The Rape*. The subject of the picture, a women slumped in a chair half-naked, a bed in the background, a man leaning against a door with his hands in his pockets, has long piqued the poetic fancy of critics. But one ultimately suspects that the picture has no subject, its title and supposed action being at most something Degas allowed to be attributed to it (it was originally exhibited with the title *Interior*). The male figure may have originated in a casual portrait sketch of his friend de Valernes. The

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female figure went through several mutations, and conceivably has a basis in one of his student observations. Their combination may well be a fortuitous accident, the underlying meaning an excrescence of Degas' subconscious of such complexity that its exact significance can never be traced. In any case, it seems not improbable that the picture was created by an apparently random selection of figures, which were then moved around until their pictorial arrangement came close to satisfying Degas. The picture is not a story, it is a collage of elements arranged for their compositional value and according to the inarticulate dictates of Degas' subconscious.[2] One has, finally, a paradigm of Degas himself, the man who perpetuated his own legend, seeming to be one thing while he was actually another, in works that seem to be one thing but are, on a deeper level, something else, their apparently traditional literary approach, their seeming perfection of draftsmanship concealing a revolutionary break with the literary tradition in painting and an entire redefinition of draftsmanship. Through a long and painful struggle Degas finally arrived at a modernism, or a modernist equivalent, so thoroughly worked out and so deeply understood that one even now has difficulty seeing his works for what they really are.

[2] Quentin Bell has suggested some of the psychological overtones of this picture in his *Degas: Le Viol.*

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

SOMETHING NEEDED TO BE SAID—I wrote to *The Times*, which decided not to have it said in its pages—about the critical practice of writing about the ideas in one's head instead of the musical facts presented to one's ear, exemplified in several pieces of writing in *The Times*. Thus, Peter G. Davis had begun a report on the opening concert in the Guarneri Quartet's Beethoven series at the Metropolitan Museum of Art with a general statement that the group's "way with Beethoven is essentially lyrical and lightweight compared to, say, the gritty drama of the Budapest Quartet," and offers "a soft-grained, even-tempered . . . view of the music." And this idea in Mr. Davis's mind of the Guarneri way of playing Beethoven had not been affected by what the group actually presented to his ear in the very first work it performed: its more than ordinarily robust delivery of the sonorous chords which begin the Quartet Op. 127 and recur later in the first movement; its other attempts in later movements to impart bigness to the music that resulted in occasional excessive vehemence. All these didn't keep Mr. Davis from writing that "the performance was full of sensitively wrought details and elegantly turned phrases," and that "the composer's sinewy thought processes were obscured by an overabundance of expression." And Allen Hughes seemed to have worked out in his mind a basic idea for his review of Michael Rogers' piano recital—the idea that Rogers did "some of the smoothest piano-playing to be heard nowadays," the playing of "a well-bred pianist and musician" in which "there were no idiosyncracies . . . to give it a personal stamp" and "not much indication of originality in his interpretative thought." And he didn't let this idea be affected by such facts of Rogers's actual playing as the grandly proclamatory style of the opening page of Schumann's Fantasy, the similar power in later pages of the first movement (to say nothing of the extraordinary continuity and coherence Rogers imparted to that discontinuously episodic movement), the impassioned high points to which Rogers carried the quietly meditative writing within the coherent shape he created in the final movement.

But these lesser reviewers had been following the practice of their superior, Harold Schonberg—for example in his Sunday article on the damaging prevalence today, as a result of the influence of Schnabel and Toscanini, of the principle of strict adherence to the composer's printed notes, which produced uniformity and lack of individuality in the playing of today's young pianists; as against the

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eighteenth and nineteenth-century tradition that had required a pianist to add something of his own to the mere printed notes—which the young pianists of today could, and should, learn about from the recorded performances of Pachmann and Hofmann and their contemporaries. In all this Schonberg was writing about what existed as idea in his mind, not about what was presented to his ear either by today's young pianists or by the records of musicians of the past. Those records show that Pachmann and Hofmann and their contemporaries did not play music with freedom and with taste in that freedom, but inflicted on it the same distortions and extravagances, for the same exhibitionistic purpose, as Tetrazzini and De Lucia and the other singers of their period did; and that Schnabel's and Toscanini's respect for the composer's text caused them not to play like human metronomes but to keep their plasticity within the limits of coherent shape, as singers like Rethberg, Bjoerling, Flagstad and Steber did. As for today, the young pianists who respect the composer's text do this in the same way as Toscanini and Schnabel; and their doing so does not result in uniformity and lack of individuality. Cliburn, Ashkenazy and Evelyne Crochet are indistinguishable as they exist in Schonberg's mind; but the listener capable of hearing their actual playing recognizes the striking differences between Cliburn's and Ashkenazy's performances of Chopin's B-minor Sonata, and between Ashkenazy's superbly articulated performance of Mozart's Concerto K.271 and Crochet's shapeless one.

Called on to review Rossini's *Otello* or Bellini's *La Straniera,* Schonberg writes the ideas in his head about what he calls the formula operas of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti—with their unvarying succession of "opening chorus . . . cavatinas followed by cabalettas . . . duets, trios and quartets, and a full ensemble to end every act"—which, for him, have little musical value, since they were written for the singers of the period to display their virtuosity and *bel canto* style; and which he says cannot be sung properly by the singers of today who, with few exceptions, don't possess that virtuosity and style. And intent on these ideas, rather than on what the works actually present to his ear, Schonberg dismisses each work as having little musical interest—does not, that is, hear and report the melodic beauty and dramatic force of much of the vocal writing in *Otello,* and what Rossini contrived for the orchestra in expressive support of that vocal writing; or the beautiful and affecting melodic writing that Bellini put into *La Straniera* to exhibit the singers' voices.

Schonberg's most ludicrous performance on this subject appeared not in *The Times* but in *Harper's.* (I find it inconceivable that there is another person who thinks and writes exactly like Schonberg in the record reviews signed Discus in *Harper's,* and must therefore believe they can be only by Schonberg.) A review titled *Old Operas and Real Music* dealt with recorded performances of Wagner's *Tris-*

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tan, the real music, and Rossini's *Semiramide* and Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia,* which, for Schonberg, were two formula operas of the period—*Lucrezia,* except for its well-known *Brindisi,* being "an awful opera . . . without an original idea or an original melody"—both with "vocal parts composed for a long-extinct breed of singer," and both "bearable if the singing is of an ultravirtuosic nature," but "murder otherwise." And though the recorded *Semiramide* wasn't "made any better musically" by Sutherland and Horne, they at least were capable of the virtuoso singing it required; whereas Caballé, who "obviously . . . is being set up as some sort of rival to Sutherland" in *Lucrezia,* was "not really a coloratura" but a lyric soprano, whose "coloratura passages are extremely labored," and who "technically . . . has no business in bel canto opera"; indeed "she may be in the process of losing both voice and reputation if she sticks to this kind of material. . . . She would provide an appealingly sung Mimi. But Lucrezia Borgia? Never."

These ideas in Schonberg's head about the two operas and the performances were ludicrously at variance with what was actually presented to his ear. In *Semiramide* one did hear every character, in every situation, sing in an extreme florid style devised not for expressive but for spectacular vocal effect; but in *Lucrezia*—except for the *Brindisi,* a set piece in bravura style for its special purpose, and the least valuable music in the opera—the characters sang melodic writing of high musical quality which amazed one with its Verdian dramatic force in the second-act confrontation of Lucrezia, her husband and her son, and moved one with its expressiveness in the concluding duet of Lucrezia and her son. This melodic writing included some intensifying florid elaboration at cadences; and these florid elaborations Caballé executed with the ease born of the same vocal control that deployed her agreeable-sounding voice in long phrases which exhibited her sense for their shape, their style, their expressiveness, or that spun it out in an occasional series of exquisite pianissimo high notes, or that projected the series with power. In *Lucrezia* it was only these short cadential elaborations that Caballé sang with ease; but at the Metropolitan later she had the insolence—in the face of Schonberg's pronouncement, which should have settled the matter—to sing the extended coloratura writing of *"Sempre libera"* in *La Traviata* with the same security and effectiveness, not with the "struggle" that proved to Schonberg "she isn't a real coloratura. She is a manufactured one, a coloratura *faute de mieux.*"

The Metropolitan's new production of Bellini's *Norma* this year, with Sutherland in the title role and Horne as Adalgisa, provided another occasion for the Schonberg operation. In his head Sutherland "still has the most glowing, the richest and most sensuous-sounding voice, of any soprano before the public"; Horne's "big, strong, securely produced voice does not have the sensuous sheen of Sutherland's";

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Bergonzi's singing as Pollione was "tonally beautiful and, as always, effortless"; Siepi, as Oroveso, "used his smooth voice with the knowledge of a great veteran"; and as for Bonynge's conducting, "his rhythm is flabby, and he was constantly throwing askew the metrical patterns with his accented upbeats." Actually, however, Sutherland never had that glowing, rich and sensuous-sounding voice; and the performance of *Norma* revealed a lessening of its former limited attractiveness: in addition to the drab lower range there was now a cold, metallic middle range; and only the top was still bright. Her use of it, moreover, included her excitingly accurate execution of florid passages, but also a greater amount of her mannered moaning. The performance revealed further that it is Horne who has the most beautiful female voice of today; and her deployment of it not only in florid passages as excitingly accurate as Sutherland's, but in equally exciting phrasing of sustained melody, provided the great singing of the occasion. Bergonzi's voice exhibited a loss of some of its former beauty, and a new strain in the production of high notes; Siepi's the roughness it has had for years. And Bonynge's conducting produced a performance that was musically sensitive and enlivened, coherently shaped and precisely executed.

The stage production was not as outrageous as some other recent ones at the Metropolitan; but it was bad enough. The couple of Stonehenge-like movable constructions designed by Desmond Heeley for all the scenes didn't provide a believable interior—or even exterior—for Norma's dwelling, and made the task of the stage director, Paul-Emile Deiber, more difficult; but it was Deiber who had Norma's children play the games in the background that distracted attention from the performance in the foreground.

There is the invented New York City Opera that the critic Alan Rich writes about—"the most artistically significant venture of its kind in this country, and quite possibly in this world," which presents "opera as good, modern, exciting theater." And there is the actual New York City Opera that has merely produced a greater number of worthless contemporary operas and a greater number of monstrosities of staging of operatic classics than the Metropolitan. It is the actual New York City Opera that presented Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* badly designed, with Lloyd Evans' damaging innovations in scenery; badly cast, with Patricia Brooks a Mélisande who looked and acted an experienced woman of the world, Louis Quilico a Golaud who looked like Rigoletto, and André Jobin a Pélleas whom it was hard to accept as an innocent; and badly directed by Frank Corsaro. As for the music, it was sung best by Quilico, and paced well by Rudel, but the orchestral sonorities, for all their delicacy, needed a larger orchestra for adequate realization.

Ashkenazy, who the year before had astonished one with a vol-

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canic performance of Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata, this year astonished one with the powerfully and grandly declamatory character of his playing not only in Beethoven's Concerto No. 5 (*Emperor*) but in his Concertos Nos. 3 and 4, at the three concerts of the London Symphony presented by Carnegie Hall. It was most striking in the opening movement of No. 4, which is in large measure quietly meditative; and I recall in particular the passage beginning four bars after the piano's entrance in the development: the series of two-bar statements falling away from an initial held chord, played usually in accordance with the *pp* marked in the score, was made by Ashkenazy into an eight-bar crescendo of dynamics and tension to the beginning of the energetic new episode. And with all its increased power the playing didn't exceed the limits of coherent shape and agreeable piano sound.

An additional point of interest was the operation of the orchestra's new principal conductor, Andre Previn, who in the concertos kept the orchestral context admirably in gear with the soloist's playing but evidently didn't feel obligated to make it as tremendous as that playing. The first concert opened with an unusually fast-paced performance of Berlioz's *Corsair* Overture; and since it was a performance conducted by someone whom Schonberg thought of as "still in the process of learning his trade," he reported that in this fast tempo "the winds had to scramble, and even the brilliant players of the London Symphony were not able to articulate"; whereas the actual playing amazed one with the seemingly effortless accuracy of the woodwinds and brass, the sensitive articulation and phrasing of the strings, in that impossibly fast tempo—a brilliant virtuoso achievement of conductor and orchestra. On the other hand the concert ended with a performance of Beethoven's Seventh in which the tempos were right and the movements proceeded, in these tempos, with continuity and coherence, but which didn't add up to a compelling statement of the work. The other concerts offered performances of symphonies by Walton and Vaughan Williams that I didn't hear.

The performance of Prokofiev's rarely heard, and not very interesting, Symphony No. 3 that young Claudio Abbado produced with the Boston Symphony at one of its Carnegie Hall concerts, the performances of Hindemith's Symphonic Metamorphoses of Themes by Weber, Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Martha Argerich) and Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* that he produced with the New York Philharmonic in two of its concerts in Philharmonic Hall—these revealed again the gifts of ear for orchestral sonority and balance, of authority and magnetic compulsion, of feeling for continuity in tension and shape, that had been so impressive in his performance of *Don Carlo* at the Metropolitan the year before. And so one was unprepared for the defects of other performances at these

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concerts, and the deficiencies they revealed in musical judgment and taste, in mere self-discipline. The Boston Symphony must include a few players who know from personal experience the marvels Koussevitzky achieved with that orchestra in Debussy's *Nuages* and *Fêtes* and Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloë* Suite—the marvels of orchestral sonority that created in *Nuages* the aural image of the stillness in which clouds moved slowly across the sky; the incredible ninth chord of the brass at the climax of *Lever du jour* in the Ravel piece; the sudden drop from a brilliant tutti, in the *Danse générale,* to magical faint sounds of distant horns. And these players could appreciate Abbado's failures—his failure even in the beautiful performance of *Nuages,* with its carefully balanced textures, to equal Koussevitzky's performance; his worse failure at the climax of the procession in *Fêtes,* where one heard not a balanced texture but an unbalanced mass of noisy sound; the coarse brass chord at the climax of *Lever du jour;* the unmagical sounds of the horns in *Danse générale.* What impelled the audience to cheer and yell at the end was Abbado's whipping up of the tempos of *Fêtes* and the Ravel piece—concerning which Toscanini made the correct comment after the sensation created by Munch's performance of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique:* "Is easy to make exciting in double tempo." Abbado did a lot of whipping up of tempo "to make exciting"; and though it did no harm in the works of Prokofiev, Hindemith and Stravinsky, it was part of the pulling of Tchaikovsky's Fifth about that distorted its shape and expressive content. What remains to be added is that Argerich had the technical equipment to play the Prokofiev concerto in the excitingly whipped-up tempos; that Stravinsky's *Oedipus* had overwhelming effect in the performance with Abraham Kaplan's Camerata Singers and a solo group which included Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. (the Narrator), Tatiana Troyanos (Jocasta), Werner Hollweg (Oedipus), Simon Estes (Creon and the Messenger) and Raymond Michalski (Tiresias); and that in four early choral pieces by Musorgsky for projected dramatic works he didn't complete it was astonishing to hear the Musorgsky idiom already unmistakably established and used with complete assurance.

After Abbado's uneven and undisciplined operation I was able to appreciate what Colin Davis' disciplined gifts produced with the Boston Symphony at another of its Carnegie Hall concerts and one in its regular Philharmonic Hall series. And in particular, after what Abbado did to the Tchaikovsky Fifth I could appreciate Davis' superb performance of the Fourth. What Schonberg characterized as "a very literal reading"—by which he meant one in which Davis "went severely along" where "other conductors . . . insert a ritard or some kind of expressive device"—actually was one in which Davis observed every one of Tchaikovsky's many directions for changes of

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tempo and expressive shaping, and in so doing produced a superbly effective realization of the work in sound with the shape and expressiveness that Tchaikovsky imagined. The symphony ended the Philharmonic Hall concert that Davis opened with a delightfully witty performance of Stravinsky's Scherzo à la Russe; and in between he wasted his and the orchestra's talents and energies on the endless manipulation of meaningless substance in Tippett's Symphony No. 2. Similarly at Carnegie Hall, after fine performances of Mozart's impassioned Overture to *Idomeneo* and his Piano Concerto K.537, with undistinguished playing of the solo part by Ingrid Haebler, Davis devoted the rest of the concert to Elgar's Symphony No. 1. It may be necessary to play these works of Elgar and Tippett for English audiences; but they shouldn't be inflicted on Americans.

The concerts in Philharmonic Hall gave me my first hearings of the acoustical results of last summer's final reconstruction; and I found that the sound of the New York Philharmonic heard in row BB on the extreme left, which before had been well-balanced and agreeable but distant, now was brightened to the point where the brass was excessively loud and coarse in tuttis that were unpleasantly noisy. These characteristics were less pronounced in the sound of the Boston Symphony that I heard in the center of row T.

The Netherlands Chamber Choir of Felix de Nobel, which I had known only from its excellent performances on records, sang as well at Hunter College Playhouse in the early vocal polyphony of Josquin Des Près, Obrecht, Gabrieli and others that it specializes in, and in modern pieces by Rudolf Escher, Frank Martin and Benjamin Britten, of which I found Britten's *Hymn to Saint Cecilia* attractive. And at two later concerts at the Playhouse I heard another performer I had known only from records—the harpsichordist George Malcolm, who at the first concert produced clear-textured and sensitively articulated performances of some of Bach's dullest music, but ended with a delightful group of Scarlatti sonatas; and who at the second concert played, among other things, Bach's fine Toccata in D and another Scarlatti group.

The Amadeus Quartet's recorded performances, ranging from moderately good to mediocre, didn't prepare me for the graceless plodding from one note to the next in Mozart's Quartet K.421, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which was the worst quartet performance I can remember hearing in a concert hall. Mozart's Clarinet Quintet K.581, which followed, offered the ear-ravishing tone and phrasing of the clarinettist Gervase de Peyer, and a little more sensitively phrased playing by the quartet. But I decided not to risk the closing performance of Mozart's Quartet K.387.

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Jerome Robbins' new work for the New York City Ballet, *In the Night,* a setting of four additional Chopin Nocturnes, provided an occasion for Clive Barnes to do some of *his* writing about what is in his head instead of what is presented to his eye. And it also gave Mr. Barnes, not one to ignore contradiction of his pronouncements, an opportunity to proclaim again what had been contradicted—for one thing, that "Robbins is a genius." This was in a Sunday article, "Jerome Robbins, Choreographer," in which Mr. Barnes wrote:

> Robbins was born to be our leading choreographer one day. He shouted greatness almost with diffidence. . . . For a time it appeared that he was prepared to accept the secondary role of theater director—interpreting other men's work—and desert the primary, creative role of choreographer. . . . But I suspect that Robbins has . . . made his real creative commitment. Robbins is a choreographer. This is probably quite important for the well-being of Robbins. It may be absolutely vital for the well-being of American dance and, for that matter, world dance.

For the new piece showed that "what Robbins is doing now is to explore the whole possibilities of choreography." One could see this being done by other choreographers—by young Eliot Feld [thus, in passing, the over-estimation of Feld was reaffirmed], by Balanchine and Ashton, both over 60 [their equality also was reaffirmed]. "But Balanchine and Ashton, while still extraordinarily fertile, are probably not going far from where they have been before. It is Robbins who is searching out all around him"—for example in partnering: in the new piece "Robbins has devised some extraordinarily ecstatic pas de deux." And reaffirmed also was the special musical character of the Robbins operation—the way the dances came straight out of what was happening in the music.

But the actual three *pas de deux* of *In the Night* that one saw on the stage reaffirmed the truth about Robbins as a choreographer of classical ballet: his limited talent for it, evident in his limited vocabulary and imagination, which he attempts to transcend with the straining ingenuity that achieves now this spectacular acrobatic detail, now that one—e.g. the sensational lift in which Verdy was held upside down—devised for its striking effect with no regard for its lack of basis in the music. The lyrical first two *pas de deux* lent themselves to being made attractive by the personal styles of Mazzo and Verdy in their dancing with Blum and Martins; the violent third one seemed to embody an idea of Robbins the choreographic deep thinker about humankind, in its conflict between McBride and Moncion with now one, now the other rushing off the stage and almost immediately returning, and with its conclusion as awful as anything in Robbins' *Facsimile:* McBride, after such a return, walking slowly across the stage to where Moncion stood, looking at him

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intently, then beginning to touch him from face down to leg, ending on her knees before him in abasement. And after that, with the fourth Nocturne, a Robbins coda in which the three couples exhibited human togetherness.

The Robbins piece was shown up as the pretentious rubbish it was, a few days later, by the completely unself-conscious and unpretentious operation of the real genius whose unending exploration of the possibilities of choreography *is* of world importance—Balanchine's in *Who Cares?,* his setting of seventeen of Gershwin's lovely songs for musical shows of the '20s and early '30s. Balanchine had seen Gershwin's *Funny Face* in London, and other musicals there, so that he had become familiar with the genre and its dance style even before he came here, and was able to use that style with assured mastery in his dances for *On Your Toes, Babes in Arms* and *The Boys from Syracuse*—to mention only the early ones I saw. The plots of the Gershwin musicals, devised to provide occasions for someone like Fred Astaire to sing a song and go into a dance with it, would be unbearable today; but the Gershwin songs and the dances that were done with them—which can be seen in the Astaire films *Shall We Dance?* and *A Damsel in Distress*—still delight the ear and eye. And Balanchine's new ballet offered a succession of the songs with his exciting elaborations of all the kinds of movements in the dances originally done with them, in numbers for large and small ensembles and for soloists alone, in couples and in groups. The elaborations included classical ballet movements; and for *The Man I Love* Balanchine devised as original and beautiful a classical supported adagio as those he had made for music by Delibes and Glinka. (Do I have to add that Mr. Barnes, "looking at Balanchine's Broadway work"—which is to say, looking at what he had seen of it, "the deplorably vulgar" *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* and the contributions to the films *The Goldwyn Follies* and *Star-Spangled Rhythm,* but not the Broadway-style dances Balanchine provided for the early musicals in addition to his innovative choreographies like the burlesque of *Scheherazade* and *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* for *On Your Toes*—felt able to say that "this is not his medium" and that while Balanchine "was an innovator, a pioneer in musicals, he was not, perhaps, a masterly creator in this field." This was confirmed for Mr. Barnes by *Who Cares*—by the "fussily trivial" choreography of "the ensembles and duets in a kind of bland Broadway style," and on the other hand by the solos and classical *pas de deux* that were good because in them Balanchine was "working in his own style." And though Gershwin "had considerable melodic invention . . . and many of his melodies have deservedly passed into our folk heritage," Mr. Barnes "would question whether he is worth a ballet in our national repertory.")

One result of Prinz's resignation from the company was that *La*

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Source was assigned to Villella, who gave the solos the impress of his own style and brought a security and personal grace to the partnering of Verdy that enabled her to dance with a new freedom and additional brilliance. McBride, in *Bugaku* with Villela, didn't achieve what Kent achieved in a later performance with Mitchell, and what only Kent seems able to achieve in the role: the fragility, with the tensile strength of fine wire, of a personally remote figure in a ritual. Mitchell, executing his movements very much as he had done in the beginning, confirmed my recollection of Villella's quietly elegant execution at that time of what he now makes enormously violent. Clifford, in his own vivid style, was an effective replacement for Prinz in the *Pas de Deux Mauresque* of *Don Quixote;* but in this work one saw the largest of the holes created by the departure of Farrell: Mazzo's dancing in the earlier scenes was lovely; but for the large movements and the climactic lifts of Act 3 she was—as in the *pas de deux* of *Diamonds*—too tiny.

Balanchine once mentioned how in his early years in Europe each new ballet of his was reported by the critics to show a saddening deterioration from the excellent one he had last done, which actually they had attacked in the same way when *it* was new. Mr. Barnes reverses this: each new ballet by Eliot Feld is the best he has done; and so *Early Songs,* which the American Ballet Company presented at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, was for Mr. Barnes "Feld's newest and perhaps loveliest of works"—which it was not for me. The program I saw opened with a performance of Feld's *Intermezzo* which confirmed the first impression I reported here—that it began with attempts at solemn meaningfulness that were as unsuccessful as those of Brahms's Intermezzi, but continued with effective and attractive dance invention for his Waltzes Op. 39. And *Early Songs,* I found, offered more of the attempts at solemn meaningfulness in movement which exhibited nothing but unsuccessful straining ingenuity, and which not only had no relation to the music of the early Strauss songs but disturbed one with its lack of relation to their words. The two Feld pieces heightened the impact of Herbert Ross's *Caprichos,* his remarkable first ballet, which he never equalled in his subsequent works, and which proved to be as impressive today in its imaginative originality and sinister power as when Ballet Theater presented it in 1950.

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STEPHEN FARBER

Women in Love

WHAT IS THE *purpose* of making a movie of *Women in Love?* In considering Ken Russell's striking film of the Lawrence novel, that question is inescapable. For although there is a great deal to admire in the film—some fine performances, stunning visual compositions, an imaginative sense of period detail—it all seems gratuitous. I say this without any outrage. I do not take the literary purist's position that it is an act of desecration merely to *film* a classic novel. But this particular classic novel presents unusual problems. What makes *Women in Love* great is exactly what makes it untranslatable.

The basic problem has nothing to do with "literary form"; it is a historical problem. A couple of years ago Pauline Kael wrote about the difficulty of adapting "important" books: "By the time *The Stranger* or a book by D. H. Lawrence is *filmed,* the book has already changed our lives, and the movie is just a famous story. Only if you know the book and what it meant, only if you have a sense of history, does the movie version suggest more, and help to bring back to you what the book represents." The film of *Women in Love* is about as faithful a version of a complex major novel as I can imagine. Almost everything in the film—every scene, practically every line of dialogue—is taken directly from the book, and the 130 minutes contain an astonishing number of the novel's highlights. Russell and Larry Kramer, who wrote the script, understand the novel very well, and they have not simplified it or coarsened it. But they have not been able to dramatize it either. The film would be bewildering to someone who did not know the book; it offers full-color illustrations of the novel, with some implicit critical and historical interpretation —an intelligent Readers Guide to Lawrence and his relationship to his period.

Lawrence himself had a sense of history when he was writing *Women in Love;* he knew he was tackling something that had never been done in English fiction. *Women in Love* is one of the most self-conscious of great novels, a laborious, agonized attempt to summarize the decay of nineteenth-century values and forge a new language for analyzing human relationships. But the *urgency* of Lawrence's struggle "to break a way through the walls of the prison as the infant in labour strives through the walls of the womb" cannot possibly be captured fifty years later; the revolutionary fire has died down. Today we are blasé about some of Lawrence's ideas, and skeptical of others. But what is still impressive in reading *Women in Love* is its tentative, exploratory, unfinished quality. Even if we are put off by some of

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Lawrence's theories, we respond to the breadth and boldness of his vision, and to his impatience with orthodox psychological and literary assumptions. That sense of impatience defies translation. Much of Russell's film feels warmed-over, second-hand, sometimes even naive and foolish, because the passionate, searching tone that gave validity to the novel has—perhaps inevitably—been replaced by earnest, academic detachment, and a cool sense of historical perspective.

I'm not sure it's possible to identify with Lawrence any more, but only someone who shared his peculiar sensual mysticism could have given real immediacy to a film of *Women in Love*. Russell and Kramer admire him from a safe distance. They're a little embarrassed by his excesses. Only one scene in the film—the nude wrestling of Birkin and Gerald by firelight—has truly Lawrentian poetry, and it suggests that Lawrence has unusual cinematic potential, at least in isolated passages; the wrestling scene is so powerful on screen that the prose seems suddenly colorless by comparison. The sex scenes are direct and startling and erotic, as they should be in a film from Lawrence, and although they contain nothing comparable to the tone of religious exaltation that Lawrence brought to his descriptions of sex, that may be just as well. But the film fails utterly when it attempts to capture the characters' relationship to nature—Birkin walking naked through the evergreens, Gudrun dancing before the cattle, the scenes in Switzerland. These scenes are much too realistically filmed. We may know what they're supposed to represent—Spontaneity or Self-Assertion—but there is a huge disproportion between what we see and what we try to read in. In other words, the symbolism is curiously flat. When Lawrence describes Birkin walking through those evergreens, the language is sensuous but allusive, leaving a great deal to the imagination, yet charged with concrete metaphoric associations that make the moment significant; in addition, Lawrence analyzes Birkin's thoughts about humanity and solitude to provide a psychological and philosophical context for the bizarre symbolic act. Russell shoots the scene very literally, and it seems hollow and pretentious. Much later, when Gudrun slides down a snow-covered hill in Switzerland and the camera moves in for a pregnant closeup as she exclaims, "This is the most complete moment of my life,"—we're bewildered. We wonder if the line is being used ironically, to make fun of Gudrun; as far as we can see, she's only been riding on a sled. At moments like these we can only say that the film fails to take Lawrence seriously, for if it did, it would have attempted to find a more extravagant and evocative romantic imagery, some equivalent to his rhapsodic prose.

Perhaps some people will be relieved simply because the film does not "tamper" with the novel in the way that, a couple of years ago, Mark Rydell's film of *The Fox* updated Lawrence's story and replaced implicit sexual relationships with very explicit ones. But

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though *The Fox* was a poorly-directed film in comparison to *Women in Love,* it was a more adventurous and provocative adaptation. By highlighting the lesbianism, the film extended Lawrence's study of the ambivalence of the independent woman in a way that illuminated his story and offered an interesting challenge to a contemporary audience. *Women in Love* plays safer and more conventionally by staying in period, but it may do Lawrence a greater disservice. What happens is that his characters and his symbolic scenes, his whole world, become "quaint" and "charming"; the film transports us to a remote, exotic part of post-Victorian England. Russell's compositions for the film are deliberately stylized and abstracted, the nineteen-twenties details affectionately exaggerated; the effort to "place" Lawrence in his historical period is really a way to *reduce* him. The art and decor and costumes, the popular songs from the period ("I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," "You Great Big Beautiful Doll") give the film a whimsical, nostalgic charm that works against whatever urgency might be left in Lawrence's passionate dramatization of modern sexual relationships.

Even considered as a social and historical commentary, the film is pale next to the novel. It tries to illustrate the decadence of English aristocracy in a few brusque, inadequate strokes—Gerald's white limousine moving through a line of blackened miners on foot, Mrs. Crich laughing madly at her husband's funeral, a grotesquely-caricatured Hermione doing an imitation of the Russian ballet. In the novel Lawrence takes great care to analyze the Crich family in relation to the Industrial Revolution and the developing technology of the early twentieth century, and his portrait of them as a doomed family is comprehensive and compassionate. The portrait is important mainly for the characterization of Gerald, who has been badly obscured in the film. The film tries to emphasize the same qualities in Gerald that Lawrence did—his coldness and savagery, his sense of family responsibility, his masochism and self-destructiveness; but partly because of careless writing, and partly because Oliver Reed plays the role with only two expressions—brutality, and a hurt, repressed vulnerability—we can't make sense of him. But since he is carefully photographed against his aristocratic surroundings, the film seems to want to supply a simple explanation for his strange behavior—Gerald is sick because his class is sick. That explanation had some validity in the novel, because of Lawrence's penetrating analysis of Gerald's family, and his persistent efforts to make Gerald an archetype by linking him symbolically with the emergent machine and with figures from Norse mythology. Both the detailed sociology and the symbolism are missing from the film. And so the social explanation for Gerald's neurosis works only if you already believe that all aristocrats are sadists—just as Visconti's *The Damned* can be read as an allegory about Nazism only if you are willing to accept

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the film's untested assumption that the degenerates of the von Essenbeck family are representative Nazis. The films themselves do not make the connections between individual and society.

Lawrence is responsible for some additional confusions in the film. After the success of *The Fox,* one would have expected the film of *Women in Love* to make more of the implicit homosexuality in the relationship between Gerald and Birkin; but the film is almost as ambiguous and elliptical in this regard as the novel. The wrestling scene does seem to be staged in a deliberately sexual manner—the very end of it has a pretty clear implication of orgasm—and at moments Gerald seems to look at Birkin with repressed desire, but it is impossible to say whether Birkin's suggestion of a love relationship between them means a homosexual experience, or some kind of mystical brotherhood, or both. In the novel Lawrence seemed to be talking about a platonic, spiritual union, yet his language contained an almost-unconscious sexual resonance. We could perhaps accept the ambiguity because Lawrence himself seemed uncertain about just how far he wanted to go and what he wanted to express; but the film-makers, fifty years later, have lost their innocence, and they are clearly aware of the homosexuality. So it is surprising that they go out of their way to avoid acknowledging it directly or clarifying the relationship of Birkin and Gerald; they feel clarification would be a betrayal of Lawrence. It seems a rather willful obscurity.

The film also reflects a more important weakness of the novel, Lawrence's inability to find convincing language for the successful love relationship of Ursula and Birkin. Lawrence's celebration of the lovers' sacred sexual contentment contains some of his murkiest writing, writing like this: "Quenched, inhuman, his fingers upon her unrevealed nudity were the fingers of silence upon silence, the body of mysterious night upon the body of mysterious night, the night masculine and feminine, never to be seen with the eye, or known with the mind, only known as a palpable revelation of mystic otherness." The film's equivalent of this scene—Ursula and Birkin's love-union before marriage—is one of those now-standard corny lyrical interludes, soft-focus flowers and foliage, and the lovers reaching out to each other in a distorted-lens shot that makes their arms look about thirty feet long. We're tempted to laugh, and the lyricism is so heavily exaggerated that I think the scene may be *intended* as parody, as a deliberate comment on Lawrence's romantic excesses. If the parody was not intentional, it is quite uncanny that the film's gaudiest cliché image corresponds to the novel's most purple prose. From then on, all of the scenes of Birkin and Ursula—Ursula hanging out the laundry while Birkin sits fishing, the two of them snuggling together in bed—are stifled by a mood of cosy domesticity; but these scenes too have their direct counterparts in the novel. The film absolutely refuses to attempt to "improve upon" Lawrence, and

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this fidelity even to his weaknesses is admirable in a way, but also self-defeating.

In only one area—the characterization of Birkin—has the film been forced to reinterpret Lawrence. In the novel Birkin is too close to Lawrence's own spokesman, and although Alan Bates has a beard that makes him look suspiciously like photographs of Lawrence, he plays the part with a delightful, waggish sense of humor that was probably the only way to make Birkin sufferable. Birkin's heavy speeches have been lifted directly from the novel, but the emphasis now is on his outrageous, mad delivery, not on the content of the speeches. He becomes a charming, brilliant eccentric, no longer a prophet of the new morality, but at least human and believable. Bates's performance is witty, relaxed, and appealing.

The film works best when it treats the sadomasochistic relationship between Gerald and Gudrun. In one powerful sequence Gudrun torments Gerald, then comes to him in bed and arouses him, and he turns on her violently; we are startled by this reminder of Lawrence's brilliant dissection of the way in which men and women use each other to satisfy their individual frustrations and hostilities. The finest single element in the film is the characteristization of Gudrun, thanks in large part to Glenda Jackson's superb performance. Gudrun is one of the most interesting versions of a character who obsessed Lawrence, the Emancipated Woman, commanding and deadly. Unlike Ursula (who comes across on screen as a plump, peevish housewife), Gudrun is dissatisfied with the conventional role of woman in her society. She wants to be independent, daring, powerful on her own terms, and she sees herself as an artist. When Gerald stops her from chasing the cattle in her mad solitary dance, and tells her that he loves her, there is a marvelous moment when a flicker of weariness and melancholy crosses Glenda Jackson's face; for Gudrun a confession of love is an anticlimax, and she will not accept that kind of limitation to her life. Yet she has a strong sexual attraction to Gerald, a desire to be degraded and violated by him, that she cannot repress. In one visually brilliant sequence we watch her walking through the sordid section of town, peering at young lovers, allowing herself to be ogled by miners, passing the prostitutes near the local pub; she is thrilled by her own boldness, testing her self-control, allowing herself to be drawn deeper and deeper into this dark sensual underworld but pulling herself back just before she is overwhelmed by it. When she finally gives in to her lust and surrenders to Gerald, she has to destroy him for making her acknowledge her own weakness.

Lawrence was persistently fascinated, and terrified by this woman, and he summarized her ambivalence in *Women in Love:* "With one will, she wants to subject herself utterly. With the other she wants to bolt, and pitch her rider to perdition." In playing the first bedroom scene with Gerald, Glenda Jackson manages one astonishing

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look of passionate anticipation that conveys both vulnerability and fierceness. Later, in the episode with the sculptor Loerke in Switzerland, the film extends Lawrence's criticism of Gudrun's emancipation in some interesting ways. Her liaison with a homosexual artist who designs friezes for German factories represents her ultimate degradation. In one scene invented for the film, she dresses up as Cleopatra and he as Tchaikovsky, and they become lovers; this bizarre, decadent charade—the union of "a homosexual and a nymphomaniac"—becomes their reality. Loerke tells Gudrun, "Between two people the range of pure sensual experience is limited. We must find a new way," and although Lawrence could sympathize with any attempt to challenge enervated, conventional relationships, he was also skeptical of possible excesses, empty experimentation for its own sake. He had to make Gudrun a monster; her refusal to be bound by a conventional role is, finally, a kind of perversion. Kramer and Russell follow Lawrence's intention, but it is interesting that in their film, as in the novel, she remains a more complex and compelling figure than Lawrence's simplistic moral evaluation would suggest. Glenda Jackson makes Gudrun the strongest character in the film, and one of the most intriguing, fully-imagined characters in any recent film. Her work in *Women in Love* is enough reason to see the film; her characterization is the only one that makes complete sense on its own terms and also enriches our understanding of the novel. But in spite of her performance, and the sumptuous color photography, that nagging question remains: Was this film necessary? What is its purpose? One can only hope that Ken Russell will now put his formidable talents to work in a project that will have a life of its own, and a possibility for immediacy that *Women in Love* lacks.

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Reviews

J. MITCHELL MORSE

Fiction Chronicle

ALL SOCIALLY-CONSCIOUS LITERATURE, even Dante's, Chaucer's, Cervantes', Shakespeare's and Milton's, includes an element of journalism, so that more and more footnotes become necessary as the current events recede from currency. But how do you provide footnotes for a film? It is by nature a one-shot production. After say twenty years it can be revived only as an antique, a document, a bibelot or an objet d'art, not as a work of art with continuing social pertinence in the sense that *Samson Agonistes* for example is still pertinent. But in our disposable culture, our throwaway culture, a culture that may already have passed the point of no-deposit-no-return, we have more and more throwaway novels, and the film seems to have replaced the novel as a serious medium for socially-conscious art. The cliché notion that films have to be non-controversial because you don't take risks with a big investment was never altogether true, and most of the films my wife and I have seen during the last two or three years have seemed to us bolder and better made than most of the novels we have read during that time. To be sure, we haven't seen many—in fact, we can recall having seen since we moved to subruralia in August 1967 only eight—but of these, five have been valid both as art and as journalism: *Dr. Strangelove, The Graduate, Midnight Cowboy, Medium Cool* and *Z;* though there are many more novels than films, we can't think of five novels of comparable artistic and social validity during the same period.

However, there are such from time to time, and they seem to come chiefly from Germany—perhaps for the same reason that much of the best American writing comes from the South: its cheap right-wing culture exacerbates in its most intelligent citizens, liberal and conservative alike, the dissatisfaction that is essential to originality. The Snopesian quality of the Nixon administration may well provoke the next period of excellence in American literature. However that may be, of the twenty-five books now before me the very best and two of the better ones are from post-Nazi Germany: *Bodies and Shadows,* a pair of early novellas by Peter Weiss; *Children are Civilians Too,* a collection of Heinrich Böll's earliest stories; and *Local Anaesthetic,* Günter Grass' new novel.[1]

[1] BODIES AND SHADOWS, by *Peter Weiss.* Delacorte Press. $5.95. CHILDREN ARE CIVILIANS TOO, by *Heinrich Böll.* McGraw-Hill. $5.95. LOCAL ANAESTHETIC, By *Günter Grass.* Harcourt, Brace & World. $6.95.

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The word "great" is too often profaned: used interchangeably with "fantastic," "fabulous," "cool," "groovy," "freaky," "outtasight" and "real zonked out," it has begun to connote cheapness. If Peggy Lee, Rod McKuen and Kellogg's Product 19 are "great," what shall we say of Pablo Casals, James Joyce and Post's Sugar Pops? I therefore refrain from using the word "great" in its old-fashioned sense except when it is so unmistakably right that to use any other word would be an evasion and perhaps an affectation. So: I say this after fully deliberating the choice of the word: Peter Weiss is a great writer. He has been great from the beginning. These two early works, "The Shadow of the Coachman's Body" (1960) and "Conversation of the Three Wayfarers" (1963), are short but breathtaking performances. Ezra Pound says somewhere that the quality of a man's mind is revealed by every brushstroke he makes. That is certainly true of Peter Weiss, whose brilliantly clear visual quality makes every line of these pieces shine with life. They are exercises—the narrator of "The Shadow . . ." calls them "notes"—but the exercises of genius. They show a variety of literary and graphic influences: Robbe-Grillet, Beckett, Kafka, Jean-Paul, Edvard Munch, Kokoschka, Charlie Chaplin, and the S.J. Perelman who wrote scripts for the Marx Brothers: but Weiss has assimilated all these to the requirements of his own phantasms. This passage is typical:

> Walking by the open window on the ground floor, I had a short look into the family's room. I noticed the father, the mother, the infant, and the son in the following distribution and relation to each other: the mother sitting on the edge of the bed at the back of the room, half in the dark, her breast bared, and the infant at her breast; the father standing at the table in the middle of the room, his fists propped on the tabletop in front of him, the light from the window full on him, outlining the face thrust forward with the mouth wide open; and opposite him, not sitting but squatting on his heels, the son, his chin pressed against the edge of the table, his shoulders pulled up to the ears, staring into the father's open mouth.

Weiss began as a painter, and now as a writer he observes our world with a painter's eye. Each of these novellas is a series of genre paintings, woodcuts and silent films, merciless in their representation of horror and squalor but so sensitively conceived and so finely executed that we read them with joy. That is what genius is for. Joy.

Heinrich Böll gives us not joy but a certain pleasure in his mature works, such as *The Clown* and *Billiards at Half-Past Nine;* in *Children are Civilians Too* he gives us pleasure from time to time, for example in "At the Bridge," a sketch of a returned soldier in a temporary post-war job, and "The Black Sheep," the story of a ne'er-do-well uncle in whose footsteps the narrator makes his own post-war

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career; but most of these stories and sketches don't even show much promise. This passage from "Reunion in the Avenue," purporting to be natural speech by a drunken lieutenant in a dugout, is the early Böll at his most ordinary—a kind of writing he has since outgrown:

> "The avenue," he said huskily, almost stammering, "the avenue was all golden—I'm not kidding, it really was, black trees with gold, and a greyish blue shimmer in the gold—I was in ecstasy as I walked slowly along under the trees as far as that house, I felt as if that fantastic beauty had spun a web around me, and I drank in the intoxicating transience of our human happiness. Do you know what I mean? That magical certainty moved me inexpressibly . . . and . . . and . . . and . . . ."

The difference between this kind of thing and *The Clown* is a measure of Böll's growth as a writer. The promise of growth can be seen in the title story and several others in this collection; and though there is nothing here to match say Isaac Babel's war stories or Thomas Mann's post-World-War-I "Disorder and Early Sorrow," this is nevertheless the work of a good and serious writer beginning to find his own best way.

Grass' *Local Anaesthetic* is a mature minor work by a major master. It is very good as far as it goes, but it doesn't go as far as *The Tin Drum* or *Dog Years* either in depth or in brio: Grass's power to create characters and invent situations, the variety and brilliance of his playing with techniques, the driving force of his language from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, chapter to chapter, all are reduced and weakened here, so that I found this short novel much slower going than either of his long ones. Perhaps Grass is giving too much of his time and energy to politics now; if so, I think he underestimates the value of his own art—a value not political or even aesthetic, but absolute. When Sartre gave up fiction for politics we didn't lose anything vital, because he was never a great novelist; but for the author of *The Tin Drum* to spend any serious amount of time campaigning for the Social Democrats is—well, as Charles Sanders Peirce remarked of using creative scientists for routine work, it's like running a steam engine by burning diamonds.

Just as the aubade, which presumably began as an outpouring of amorous passion, became a formal rite in which every turn was prescribed, and just as Harlequin's original grotesque rags patched with patch on patch became a neat leotard of lozenges, so the fresh techniques worked out by Biely, Rilke, Joyce and Kafka at the risk of their sanity have become tiresomely cute clichés in the hands of those who later picked them up. If a novelist has no freshness of his own, Joyce's techniques won't help him any better than John Galsworthy's. Grass has a great deal of freshness when he isn't being perfunctory, but in *Local Anaesthetic* he is perfunctory most of the time. There is

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nothing in it to compare with such things in *The Tin Drum* as Oskar's bouncing cough in the cathedral, the lay of Meyn the trumpeter, the view from the thirty-foot tower, the siege of the post office, the popping of Korneff's boils, or Cipolla reborn in the Onion Cellar.

As an expression of the guilt-feelings of Grass's generation, *Local Anaesthetic* has a certain documentary interest. The narrator, a middle-aged high school history teacher named Eberhard Starusch ("Old Hardy"), turns out to be a teen-age friend of ours grown up: Störtebeker, the leader of Oskar's gang, the Dusters. He is now as much a gentle liberal as he was formerly a violent anarchist. After a year in a penal battalion during the war, clearing mines in sight of the enemy and without covering fire, he studied engineering, became well known in the cement industry as an inventor of cheaper and better processes, got engaged to a rich cement manufacturer's only daughter, and then (since she was pre-maritally cuckolding him in a particularly contemptible way) threw it all over in favor of teaching history, an occupation he found more congenial and considered more important. Or so he would have us and his dentist believe, as he sits day after day in the dentist's chair indulging fantasies while undergoing the surgical correction of his congenital fearless-Fosdickism. About halfway through the series of operations he is given something else to think and talk and talk and talk about: his star student (whose name, Scherbaum, means Sheartree or Cutbeam, and whose girlfriend's name is Veronica, in case you care to play who's got the symbol)—his star student, I was saying, announces that he is going to soak with gasoline and burn his own beloved dachshund, in front of the terrace of a fashionable restaurant, and hand out leaflets saying, "Napalm is worse than gasoline," by way of arousing people to the horrors of Vietnam. The rest of the book deals with the teacher's efforts to work out, with the dentist's help, convincing liberal arguments against such an act. They seem to think of every argument except the obvious one that it's silly and the obvious one about the means corrupting the end. But the student is finally dissuaded, by a combination of fortuitous circumstances, and the book ends in a sad welter of liberal indecision and unimaginative earnestness. We can't even be sure that Grass himself thinks the idea is silly. The dentist spouts a great deal of the stoicism that has been fashionable since the middle fifties, his chief source of quotations being Seneca, the billionaire. Grass has a healthy contempt for it, and seems to have little else for any other doctrine, even for Social Democracy. This book is an indulgence in political wistfulness. "How is the gold become dim!" sighs Old Hardy. It is indeed—and most of it was plastic anyhow. I hope Grass throws over the political busyness that has so demoralized him and gets back to producing the bright gold of his own full-time genius.

The next book (I have stacked them in some kind of order) is from an earlier Germany, and its author from German-speaking Switzer-

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land. Robert Walser's *Jakob von Gunten,* written in Berlin in 1908, published there in 1909, and thenceforth ignored, is one of the wittiest, wackiest, most charming and most civilized satires I have ever read: it mocks not only the *Bildungsroman,* as its wonderful translator Christopher Middleton (to whom all gratitude) observes, but also the whole servile right-and-proper culture that was ultimately to issue in Nazism.[2] Its narrator-hero, a poor boy with a lively independent mind, is sent to a school for servants, where poor boys are taught to suppress their liveliness and independence of mind, to be satisfied, to practice dullness, to abandon hope. But it is not in Jakob to be a servant. He is one of the world's naturally free men, like Bartleby, Schweik, the narrator of Luigi Malerba's *The Serpent,* and—even without money—that great soul A.O. Barnabooth, who sailed the seas and oceans in his yacht *Le Parvenu.* Jakob enjoys living for its own sake. He enjoys such simple things as running down stairs, and opening doors, and standing on one leg, and holding his breath, and writing. He also enjoys fantasies: he would like to be rich so he could walk the streets giving money to starving artists, or a great general so he could let a captured traitor go. "Only delight," he says, "excuses what depravity has undertaken." If Richard Nixon could understand that, he wouldn't be Richard Nixon and our official national tone wouldn't be so inexcusably dull. Thanks, Christopher Middleton, for discovering Robert Walser. Thanks, University of Texas Press, for giving him to us. Give us more of him, more more more.

Fascism was less theatrical in Italy than in Germany, the Italian post-Fascist hangover is accordingly less lugubrious, and its literary manifestations thus far have been less crazy and less interesting. Post-Fascist Italian film directors have been experimental and full of poetry and intelligence, but post-Fascist Italian novelists for the most part continue to use dead techniques, and their ideas are accordingly limited. There are no Italian equivalents of Alexander Kluge or Jakov Lind, much less of Grass and Weiss. The two Italian novels in my stack, P.M. Pasinetti's *From the Academy Bridge* and Giorgio Bassani's *The Heron,* are respectively more analogous to those of C.P. Snow and Charles Morgan.[3]

National designations in literature are often arbitrary and often dubious; Mr. Pasinetti lives in California and writes in English, so if you want to call him an American writer I don't care. He writes quite decent English, though he is no Nabokov or Conrad or Veblen or Dinesen or Bemelmans; and his new novel is quite decent and far better than any Snow job, though it is not anything very extraordinary. It recounts, in the first person singular, the career of an Italian

[2] JAKOB VON GUNTEN, by *Robert Walser.* University of Texas Press. $5.50.
[3] FROM THE ACADEMY BRIDGE, by *P.M. Pasinetti.* Random House. $6.95. THE HERON, by *Giorgio Bassani.* Harcourt, Brace & World. $5.95.

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academic careerist who disapproved of the Fascist regime but acquiesced in it and survived and after the war moved to California and did very well indeed playing the game of foundation grants for noble purposes. It reminds me of Taylor Caldwell's and William Blake's novels of big business even more strongly than of Snow's novels of academic careerism; but Pasinetti has a humane lightness that raises him above these and all such dream peddlers. He smiles. He knows that the aim of the game is to have power, not to use it for one purpose rather than another. *From the Academy Bridge,* a pleasant middlebrow novel concerned equally with the outer and the inner glamor, is saved by the author's own freedom from bedazzlement. He is too intelligent to believe his own advertising or take his product seriously. And he has invented a much-needed word: *mysteriosophic.*

One of Pasinetti's characters is a millionaire manufacturer of candy, ice cream and frozen pastries, and *From the Academy Bridge* is itself a commercial confection. *Heron* is not. Bassani's intentions are serious and honorable. *Heron* is a nineteenth-century novel, by a nineteenth-century omniscient author, about twentieth-century life. It recounts a day's hunting trip in which the hunter shoots some forty ducks, geese and coots, and his guide, an embittered Mellors type, shoots a beautiful red heron, not good to eat and not even satisfactory for stuffing. Throughout the day the hunter feels nothing but depression. In the morning he kisses his sleeping little daughter on the forehead and says goodbye to his indifferent wife; in the evening he returns, having given away the birds and decided to shoot himself through the head; but before doing so he goes to his mother's room, as his custom is, and talks with her before she falls asleep.

Does this sound like the plot of a social or political novel? It is. For the man is a rich lawyer-landowner who lives in Ferrara, and he goes hunting on his own land, where the Communist peasants, like all the others in the district, are furious and getting ready to strike. The hunting trip is a pretext for visiting his land, in order to demonstrate that it is his and that he doesn't intend to let it go by default and that even if all the other landowners are afraid to go into the district he isn't. The decision is all the more difficult because he hasn't visited the place in fifteen years. And because he is a Jew. And because his Christian wife's indifference to him dates from the day at the beginning of the Nazi influence in Italy when in order to prevent the confiscation of his property he had put it all in her name. Grass once said of *The Tin Drum* that it was a political novel, "but a novel, not politics." That is precisely the virtue of *The Heron:* it sees the outer world as significant only because of its influence on the inner world. It is a good novel. And yet by comparison with the good twentieth-century novels it seems rather pale. The new techniques really are better.

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Next come two books of short stories from India: *The World of Premchand,* selected and translated by David Rubin, and R.K. Narayan's *A Horse and Two Goats.*[4] "Premchand" was the pen name of Dhanpat Rai (1880-1936), "to whom," says Mr. Rubin, "belongs the distinction of creating the serious short story—and the serious novel as well—in both Hindi and Urdu. Virtually single-handed he lifted fiction in these languages from a quagmire of aimless romantic chronicles to a high level of realistic narrative comparable to European fiction of the time." This small selection from a large body of work is intended as an introduction to a writer hitherto unknown in the West, and it is an excellent one: though in my ignorance I can't judge Mr. Rubin's choice, I respond with delight to every one of these moral tales and satires. Their characters are poor villagers, wandering holy men, rich Brahmans, conservative merchants, beaten-down street sweepers, revered politicians—all the people of India, or of anywhere, shown in all the activities of life that have the same purposes everywhere, but in the specific forms they took in India under the hard conditions of foreign rule. Mr. Rubin is right to compare these stories to those of European realists: some remind me of Chekhov, some of Gogol, some of Verga, some of Unamuno: but they all have Premchand's own flavor, and it is excellent. If Mr. Rubin's title reminds you of *The World of Sholem Aleichem,* that was doubtless his intention: for Premchand, like Sholem Aleichem and those others, wrote for his own people, not for tourists or slummers.

Narayan does write for tourists. Since he writes in English, and since he is not, like R. Prawer Jhabvala, an outsider, this is difficult or perhaps impossible to avoid. Which is not to say that he is a dishonest writer, but only that there are degrees of honesty and that if there is a sharp clear line between honesty and commerciality it is not easy to locate. Certainly Narayan produces a very good commercial product; and if he appears to condescend to the natives, the cause of this appearance may be not that he is conducting a tour but that he really does condescend. In any case, the six stories in this collection, though well written, turn me off. I think it's their superior chuckling tone.

Next we have three books from Latin America: Gabriel García Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Colombia), Antonio Olavo Pereira's *Marcoré* (Brazil), and Alejo Carpentier's *War of Time* (Cuba).[5]

One Hundred Years of Solitude is an old-fashioned chronicle of the

[4] THE WORLD OF PREMCHAND, by *Premchand.* Indiana University Press. $6.50. A HORSE AND TWO GOATS, by *R.K. Narayan.* Viking Press. $5.75.

[5] ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE, by *Gabriel García Marquez.* Harper & Row. $7.95. MARCORÉ, by *Antonio Olavo Pereira.* University of Texas Press. $6.50. WAR OF TIME, by Alejo Carpentier. Alfred A. Knopf. $4.95.

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generations of a family full of will and energy and recklessness and greed and idealism and grandiosity; the novel seems, like the family, to live entirely on the surface of things, and it is, to be sure, a good rousing entertainment; but there are depths, both in the family and in the novel. At the beginning of the chronicle a boy baby is born with a cartilaginous corkscrew tail like that of a pig, at the end a hundred years later—his lifelong virginity notwithstanding—it happens again, and in between there is a daughter who is a queen bee in human form and who one afternoon while folding sheets flies up in the air out of sight and is never seen again, and there are all kinds of bandits and gypsies, and a lusty conjure-woman named (wouldn't you know it?) Pilar, and a revolutionary colonel who loses 32 wars in 20 years, and a five-year rain followed by a permanent drought that dries the rotted world to dust, and (don't worry) an indomitable great-grandma who pulls everybody through so they can go on livin' an' livin' an' livin'. But along with the fun there are griefs and horrors that Marquez takes seriously, and I think we must take Marquez seriously. He is a poet of excess.

Must we take Pereira seriously? "Marcoré" is the pet name of Marco Aurelio, an only child, whose birth ten years after his parents' marriage changes their life for better and for worse. The father, who doesn't tell us his family name, writes a running account of the events and his reflections on them. His beautiful, charming and loving wife, in her anxiety, promises the Virgin Mary that if the coming child is healthy and well formed she will give up sex for the rest of her life. When she tells her husband, he is perturbed no end; being neither a rapist nor a saint, he turns to other women—while continuing to love his wife and developing an ever-increasing love for his son. His wife knows, understands and accepts the situation; but since they live in a small town where gossip is the only sustenance of intellectual life, and since the husband keeps the secret of his wife's vow, he comes to be regarded as a lecherous beast and she as a martyr. The psychology is valid; the art is not. The translators tell us in their rather schoolteacherish introduction that Pereira adopted his technique from Machado de Assis; but *Marcoré* has none of the free discursiveness of *Epitaph of a Small Winner*: for, though the narrator purports to write for his own eyes only, he writes not a diary or a series of notes but a novel, in which he keeps telling himself things he already knows in order to let the reader in on them. He even divides it into Chapters with numbers and into Parts with titles. In literary terms it is a naive performance; and the psychology, after that of *Epitaph,* or *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,* or even *Nausea,* turns on no lights.

How mysterious and unaccountable are time's reversals, I muse while breaking the neck off the third dusty bottle of amontillado. In the nineteenth century the Southerner Edgar Allan Poe had a Northern cousin named Edgar Allan Rich, but in the twentieth century the

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Southerner Henry Allen Moe has a Northern cousin named Henry Allen Less. These salutary reflections on the ultimate justice and subtle providence of Providence are inspired by the last three stories in *War of Time,* which (I hate to say this, but a sense of duty compels me) are less than Poe. They fulfill the worst apprehensions aroused in us by that science-fiction title. "Journey Back to the Source" is a heavy fantasy in which the fragments of a mansion reassemble themselves and its history takes place in reverse, from demolition to the earliest infancy of its first owner; "Like the Night" is a heavy fantasy in which a young man repeatedly sails off to war, led by Agamemnon or Cortez or La Salle or Eisenhower; and "The Chosen" is a heavy fantasy about the building of an Ark somewhere in what is now called Latin America, the ensuing flood, the Ark's meeting with four others—Noah's, Deucalion's, one from Egypt and one from China—and the resumption of warfare all over the world before the mud dries. Sophomore gimmickry. But the collection is redeemed by the two other stories: "Right of Sanctuary," an adult political satire, and "The Highroad of Saint James," a magnificent historical novella—a masterpiece of its genre—about the colonization of the West Indies. The book is worth buying for the sake of this story alone.

A fantast in the best modern manner, Eugène Ionesco, is here with *The Colonel's Photograph and Other Stories*; but the vision that has given us such wonderful nightmares on the stage is less effectively realized in these six stories, four of which contain the germs of plays we know.[6] Coleridge's reputation would be solider if misguided admirers hadn't dug up and published his juvenilia and every other scrap they could find, and I think it was a mistake for Ionesco to publish work that doesn't adequately show his talent.

Ordinarily I'd rather not have background music, but a mocking bird sits on our chimney and sings, and his sweet chirps, trills, coos and whistles come out of the fireplace in the room where I sit typing, and they go perfectly with the next two books—Mary Lavin's *Happiness* and Edna O'Brien's *A Pagan Place*—which have all the green of Ireland in them.[7] Mary Lavin has never been adequately appreciated in the United States. She is one of the very best Irish story-tellers—for my money she is better than Frank O'Connor—and this collection is fully characteristic. She turns the light of her eyes on things like the silk marker in a priest's missal and a convert to Catholicism genuflecting "quickly, and as if carelessly, like a born Catholic." Her stories are full of such epiphanies. *A Pagan Place* is less significant but just as Irish; it manages to give the feel of Irishness without being

[6] THE COLONEL'S PHOTOGRAPH AND OTHER STORIES, by *Eugène Ionesco*. Grove Press. $4.95.

[7] HAPPINESS AND OTHER STORIES, by *Mary Lavin*. Houghton Mifflin. $4.95. A PAGAN PLACE, by *Edna O'Brien*. Alfred A. Knopf. $5.95.

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cutely picturesque. It is told in a kind of indirect discourse: a nun reminisces about her childhood and girlhood up to the time she goes off to become a nun. She recalls herself in the second person, as if she were talking to herself: "You said Emma was coming home. He said Emma must be a woman now. You thought that by a woman he might mean a whole series of personal things; being bosomed, et cetera, things you shied away from." The effect is not so much of distance as of silence: a charming rural silence.

Rural talk, unedited and poured profusely out by an affectionate gatherer up, is something else again. Eudora Welty, one of our very best writers, has not done us or herself or the art of writing any good with her new novel, *Losing Battles,* because the gab of a rural Mississippi family gathering, however picturesque in its particular turns of phrase, is not something an outsider cares to listen to for two days without let-up.[8] "Some persons," says William James, "have a real mania for completeness, they must express every step. They are the most intolerable of companions, and although their mental energy may in its way be great, they always strike us as weak and second-rate," their weakness being "perhaps less a defect than an excess, the constant need to animadvert upon" every detail of everybody's life. The monologue of Jason Compson IV in *The Sound and the Fury* is a work of art such as no real redneck would be capable of, because it is ordered, directed and controlled by William Faulkner; but in *Losing Battles* the folks just talk and talk, and Miss Welty is so infatuated she just lets them run on, and there doesn't seem to be any direction, and it gets pretty tiresome. The picturesque is a delusion, aesthetically as well as socially.

There are two slim but interesting books from the Fulcrum Press in London, distributed in this country by Horizon Press: Tom Raworth's *A Serial Biography* and Jeff Nuttall's *Pig.*[9] Both are poetic evocations of the sickness of sharp and sensitive minds caught in the gritty grimy culture of London poverty and miseducation. John Hawkes has described it with greater detail in *The Lime Twig;* Alan Sillitoe has damned it; T.S. Eliot has suggested that it would be perfectly all right if only the poor had the true faith; but I find these two books more vivid and valid representations of pitiful vileness than any of those others. Their ultimate horror is the implication that most of the people caught in that life will never stand up and refuse to rape each other in public toilets or otherwise cooperate in their own degradation. They are the raw material for fascist movements.

An easier degradation, because there is more money and the settings are pleasanter, is portrayed by Robert Hemenway in *The Girl Who*

[8] LOSING BATTLES, by *Eudora Welty*. Random House. $7.95.

[9] A SERIAL BIOGRAPHY, by *Tom Raworth*. Fulcrum Press. $4.50. PIG, by *Jeff Nuttall*. Fulcrum Press. $4.50.

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Sang with the Beatles and Other Stories.[10] Here we have the limbo of fairly literate, fairly sensitive New Yorkers who work at jobs they can't take seriously or give themselves to—laying out trade papers, writing ad copy, editing fashion magazines, modeling clothes, painting commercial posters, directing TV commercials, writing market-research reports, doing something in the office of a foundation—so that the inconsequence and vague sadness of their daytime lives—"lives without life or resonance"—depresses their evenings and weekends with each other and destroys their relationships. They stay in New York because they don't want to go back to St. Louis; but St. Louis comes to them, for they *are* St. Louis. The title story, about a girl who sang along with Beatles records and imagined she had joined their group, and of her market-researching husband's inability to compete with them, illustrates perfectly how fairly literate, fairly sensitive people create St. Louis in New York. Mr. Hemenway is something of a late bloomer, but I think he will become one of our better writers.

The only remaining book before me that is worth taking at all seriously is Mavis Gallant's *A Fairly Good Time.*[11] It is a pleasant novel of manners: "Next, I remember, she and Karel started talking French. It's not their common language; Karel hardly knows any at all. As for Renata, you once said her French sounded like someone emerging from shock. But, you know, people will swallow any amount of absurdity so long as it's in another language—any other. Karel and Renata haven't invented French, but they've invented a way of being together." That kind of thing. It's about a girl named Shirley who is childish and lacks resolution and makes all kinds of stupid mistakes because of nothing more than laziness, but who gradually gets hold of herself and gains some confidence and on the whole has a fairly good time. Miss Gallant has all the virtues of a good old-fashioned novelist: she can create characters and invent situations, she has a good ear for the way people talk, and she writes good clear unmessy articulate English prose. Bless her. Cherish her. Encourage her.

Each of the remaining six books was quite evidently written with the intention that it would be a best seller; but, as I write, only one has made *The New York Times'* list: James Dickey's *Deliverance.*[12] It is a fast-moving novel of outdoor adventure—hunting with bows and arrows, shooting rapids, climbing cliffs, competing for life itself against gratuitous murderers—with some fashionable sodomy and redneck meanness thrown in. Mr. Dickey is one of our best poets, but

[10] THE GIRL WHO SANG WITH THE BEATLES, by *Robert Hemenway.* Alfred A. Knopf. $4.95.

[11] A FAIRLY GOOD TIME, by *Mavis Gallant.* Random House. $5.95.

[12] DELIVERANCE, by *James Dickey.* Houghton Mifflin. $5.95.

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his fine command of language is suppressed here. And I can't sympathize with any of his supposedly sympathetic characters. They are so completely extroverted, there is so little to them, that I really don't see a great deal to choose between them and the rednecks who attack them. The other five books[13] are just trash. John McIntosh's *The Stonefish* is a mediocre travel-adventure-intrigue-in-exotic-places yarn; Thomas Berger's *Vital Parts* and Janet Frame's *Intensive Care* are pretentious science fiction that their authors evidently take seriously; Shirley Hazzard's *The Bay of Noon* is perfectly described by the jacket blurb: "The setting is Naples, in all its paradox of baroque extravagance and squalor. At the center of the action is Jenny, young, pretty, and unawakened, who has come to Naples from London in flight from a somber drama, unaware that" etc. And Lawrence Durrell's *Nunquam* is the sequel to Lawrence Durrell's *Tunc*. We prefer the Akropolis, a rowdy Greek restaurant in Philadelphia, with a rowdy belly dancer whom I love. She is not a philosopher, and her name is not Iolanthe.

I look across the room at a wall of books that have given us pleasure, many of them from past ages and dead cultures but most of them better written than most of these, of which most will wind up not in our house but in the Ambler, Pa., public library, and I feel some obvious melancholy thoughts beginning to stir; but from the fireplace to my left comes the voice of the mocking bird, and when I swivel around and look out the door I see that while I have sat here pounding the typewriter Spring has come with pink dogwood and yellow forsythia, and around the corner of the house the apple and pear trees are full of white blossoms, and on the other side is a big blossoming tree my wife says is a decorative apple, more deeply pink than the dogwood, and a pair of pheasants are walking across our field. Who needs books?

[13] THE STONEFISH, by *John McIntosh*. Harcourt, Brace & World. $6.50. VITAL PARTS, by Thomas Berger. Richard W. Baron. $6.95. INTENSIVE CARE, By *Janet Frame*. George Braziller. $6.95. THE BAY OF NOON, by *Shirley Hazzard*. Atlantic-Little Brown. $5.95. NUNQUAM, by *Lawrence Durrell*. E. P. Dutton & Co. $7.95.

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GUY DAVENPORT

Where Poems Come From

BOOKS HAVE FAMILY RESEMBLANCES and tribal affinities. Stanley Burnshaw's treatise on the poetic afflatus is a grandchild of Arthur Koestler's *The Act of Creation* (1964) and *The Ghost in the Machine* (1967) and is a cousin to René Dubos' *So Human an Animal* and all the recent books we've been getting from the New Biology and its attendant prophets—roughly Konrad Lorenz and his Circle. The slightly sinister figure of Eugène Marais haunts these new Calvinists—Marais, the Roger Casement of biology. It was he, the obscure South African amateur scientist writing perversely in Afrikaans and wearing his misanthropy like an opera cape, who tore open the closed question of man's instincts and started the search for a definition of man that does not set out in blind faith that we are born blank-minded. Along with the news that we are born programmed with the instincts of the animal we are has come a spill of attendant suspicions. If man is a brute only partially tamed, he is also an artist and a scientist. Might not the same spooky instincts that drive him to his aggression, jealousy, mad possessiveness, and other ape-like postures lie at the root of his creativeness? Mr. Koestler has pondered this notion with much learning, and now Mr. Burnshaw has searched through hundreds of books and come up with a raggle-taggle and breathless report on the source of poetry from deep down in the artesian wells and half-explored ravines of the central nervous system.[1]

Or so he says. It is difficult to decide if the trouble with Mr. Burnshaw's book is that he labors his subject until we are on our knees crying for mercy, or if he has brought in so many quotations that his own perspicacity gets lost in the heap. In any case, Mr. Burnshaw has read entirely too many books. The result is a confusion of voices. Open *The Seamless Web* at random and you will find on a single page (106) quotations from Heraclitus, Yeats, A. C. Bradley, Goethe, Eckermann, Blake, Plato, Maritain, and Bacon. The next page begins with Bacon quoting Lucretius quoting Anaxagoras. Good company, God knows, but let loose all together they elbow each other a little, and Mr. Burnshaw is talking right along with them.

The reader must therefore find with some ingenuity the subject of Mr. Burnshaw's essay. Whatever it is, it is diffused through so many randomly posited testimonials, illustrations, and obliquities that it is rather finely shredded by the time one has hold of it. I think the

[1] THE SEAMLESS WEB, by *Stanley Burnshaw*. George Braziller. $7.50.

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question asked by the essay is this: What spiritual state generates poetry? And the further question: What good is poetry to man? The answer Mr. Burnshaw likes to this second question is one given by John Keble, who said that poetry keeps man sane. So do all the arts, I should think, from carpentry to music.

To answer his first question Mr. Burnshaw moves eclectically through the New Biology, the *obiter dicta* of hundreds of poets, and a library of criticism. He has found many a treasure, and the reading of this rich book ought perhaps to be a relaxed state in which one simply listens to Mr. Burnshaw's fervent monologue. It is like being in the room with a charmingly intelligent man who has found a big subject in several hundred books. He attacks the subject this way, that way, pointing out this astuteness and that perception, all the while taking down book after book and reading the relevant passage. Having heard him to the end, you are still a bit puzzled as to how you might condense it all for its coherence and thrust, but you are aware that it is an important discussion you've heard. And that may be the immediate usefulness of this book: it invites speculation, arouses new curiosities, and may fling down a gauntlet. I found myself being most grateful for Mr. Burnshaw's dismissing the current vulgar opinion that poetry is self-expression.

At the risk of offering a map in primary colors for what in reality is a densely wooded kingdom, I think we might say that Mr. Burnshaw wants to tunnel through the world of Descartes and Locke and get back to the primal sense of the arts as inspiration, possession, vision. And he wants to do it not with enthusiasm and wishful thinking but with the unviolated reason of science, or at least with the moral support of several advance scouting parties among the biologists. He wants to locate the origin of poetry neither in the desire for elegant self-expression nor in the rational, objective desire of the artist to be a steady fulcrum for the world's moral uplift. Poetry comes rather from a more intricate and unexplored source. It comes not from the mind but the body.

Such an idea can be both maddeningly intractable and wonderfully useful. Mr. Burnshaw finds in it the discernible heaves and throbs of the power of poetry to move us with variously modulated emotions. Metric derives from the dance; the music of poetry is therefore addressed to and originates in the muscles. The tongue dances right along with feet and arms, and there is obviously some plexus deep in the inwards of the central nervous system that is the heart of the dance. Every movement of a poem can be traced to corresponding physical resonances. Like music and painting, it arises from the total organism.

Mr. Burnshaw, with these potent matters before him, devotes the greater part of his energies to the fact that poetry, like any creative impulse, is more likely than not born in the anarchy of strong emotion

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and must be tamed before being shaped into a symbol of universal comprehension. The poem is born raw and bloody, the darkness of dreams still clinging to it. It is frequently in conflict with the code of the tribe. If it is a successful poem, it has the business of modifying the sensibilities of the order into which it is introduced. Mr. Burnshaw's arguing of these perceptions proceeds with much heat and perhaps too much documentation and illustration. The reader finds himself longing for an outline, or for a succinct graph.

The reader will also find himself practically at every point wanting to join in the discussion. Any knowledge of the arts will never overlap another knowledge of the arts, and I must now continue this review not as a formal response to a book which I have been asked to assess for the reading community, but as a response from a particular reader who has found the book to be extremely interesting but also a little confusing and sometimes wide of its aim.

First of all, I kept building up expectations that were not satisfied. I thought surely that Mr. Burnshaw would get around to the very modern thinkers and artists who seem to me to have contributed to his subject. Nowhere, for instance, do I find Ray L. Birdwhistell, Jr., the wizard kinesiologist who knows more about eyesight, the movements of the body, and the reverberations of emotion within the body than any man alive. If reading a poem makes the hair crawl on the back of your neck, Dr. Birdwhistell also knows that it is making your left toe twitch and the right eye dilate a minim. It will be a great day when Mr. Burnshaw meets Dr. Birdwhistell.

And Stan Brakhage. His *Metaphors on Vision* is as resourceful a set of insights into the creative process as we have had recently, and Brakhage's store of knowledge about the body and perception is (I suspect) way out in advance of science.

And Robert Kelly, that great singer of the body? And Gottfried Benn and his ideas about primal vision? And Louis Zukofsky and Charles Olson and their clarities about breathing? Thomas Mann figures in the network of quotations not for his fascinating analyses of the creative process but as the purveyor of a secondary source for a quotation of Dostoievsky. Joyce is passed over altogether. It is, of course, absurd to keep pointing out what one would have liked to see in a book. But these inattentions serve to define a curious thing about this book: it is flattened against the centrifuge of a passionate argument.

When Mr. Burnshaw writes such a sentence as, "To anyone personally acquainted with creative artists, the picture of poets busying themselves for the high purpose of producing objects to give other people pleasure or instruction or knowledge or moral guidance is simply too ludicrous to be borne," he discloses his determination to believe that poetry can only be the voice of a possessed initiate. He also condescends from an apparent vantage of great privilege; even

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so, I who am less privileged, would like to witness for the opposite view and say that it is not in the least ludicrous to imagine poets producing objects (curious phrase!) to give other people pleasure, instruction, knowledge, and moral guidance. In fact, it seems to me to be the great enterprise of modern poetry to do just that; we live amongst the most moralistic pack of versifiers ever to be set loose on a public since the days of Michael Wigglesworth. Allen Ginsberg is a minor Hebrew prophet, Robert Lowell a master of the didactic, Gregory Corso a friar scholastic, Robert Creeley an anguished moralist. Poetry is not yet capable of escaping from the context given it by Transcendentalism. I cannot think of a poet who does not think of himself as having a purpose and a high calling.

What in the world would the reviewers and professors *do* if we were to have a Catullus or a Sappho? There has been only one poet in English since Christopher Smart who was untouched by the moral fervor of Transcendentalism; there's no need to add that he's unread. In fact, there's greater purpose in not mentioning his name, as it would be tossing his crown of laurel into bewilderment and indifference.

That is, for all his careful inspection of the kinds of voice with which poems speak, Mr. Burnshaw sees *the poem* as a particular kind of poetry to the exclusion of other kinds. Poetry for him is lyric or elegiac almost wholly, and I think what moves him is *song*, the rich surge of emotion, the radiant glory of speech in flight. This is splendid, of course, but its tends toward a puritanism that diminishes our taste for the comic, the satiric, the grotesque, the narrative poem, the wholesome and drab.

Poetry is most certainly, as Mr. Burnshaw elucidates, the most intense of man's voices. To devote a long and intricate book to its source within the spirit, and to the tensions of its creation and reception is an enterprise that can only be praised, particularly when it is written by a scholar as inexhaustibly curious and as well read as Mr. Burnshaw.

Yet I feel that there is a limiting asymmetry to this study—a missing room to the structure. An inspection of origins ought also to concern itself with final causes. Our century is time-bound in its psychological bias; future ages will marvel at our inwardness, at the fervor of our subjectivity. It would be useful to have a companion book to Mr. Burnshaw's treatise on the birth of poems—a study of poetry in the world, its effectiveness and its usefulness. I would like to think that the use of poetry is to teach. Within the arts we have the memory of mankind in a way no other continuum of culture has kept the useful past. Science is self-erasing and constantly under revision. The ecological skills shift as the age demands.

It is true that the arts keep us sane, but a larger basis for this perception is surely the fact that the arts keep us civilized. Once a poem

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is written, it belongs to the world, and its greatest destiny is its usefulness to the tribe. Language is perpetually refined by the poet, the eye is taught by the painter, the ear by the composer. The psychology of aesthetics is of limited interest when we note that poetry teaches with a greater force than it entertains. The tragedy of our time may be that the two fierce voices—Ruskin's and Pound's—which cried out that the arts are the teachers of morality first and foremost are precisely the easiest voices to discount as those of charming cranks. One might do worse than notice that these two cranks made the most extensive studies of the arts of their two centuries and guarded the highest excellence of the arts, and that they knew what they were talking about.

And (if my experience with the teaching of poetry to students is in any way typical) it is worthwhile adding that the power of the poem to teach not only sensibilities and the subtle movements of the spirit but knowledge, real lasting *felt* knowledge, is going unnoticed among the scholars and pedagogues. The body of knowledge locked into and releasable from poetry can replace practically any university in the Republic. First things first, then. The primal importance of a poem is what it can add to the individual mind.

Poetry is the voice of a poet at its birth, the voice of a people in its ultimate fulfilment as a successful and useful work of art.

Notes on Contributors

WILLIAM STAFFORD will take up duties as poetry consultant to the Library of Congress in September. His latest collection of poems, *Allegiances,* was published by Harper & Row this spring. Mr. Stafford lives in Oregon and teaches English at Lewis and Clark College.

HAYDEN CARRUTH, a frequent contributor, lives in Johnson, Vermont. An anthology of 20th-century American poetry edited by him will soon be published by Bantam Books.

PHILIP LEVINE's most recent collection of poems, *Not This Pig,* was published by Wesleyan University Press.

VERNON YOUNG's essay in this issue is a section from his recently completed book on Ingmar Bergman, *Cinema Borealis,* to be published by David Lewis later this year.

CHARLES W. MILLARD's next contribution to THE HUDSON REVIEW will be a review of the Matisse show currently being shown in Paris.

J. MITCHELL MORSE, a professor at Temple University and author of *The Sympathetic Alien* and *Matters of Style,* has just completed another book, *The Irrelevant English Teacher*; or, *How to Overcome That Guilty Feeling.*

ROGER SALE is at work on an essay on the Oz books.

BERNARD BERGONZI is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *The Early H. G. Wells* and *Heroes' Twilight.*

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WILLIAM DICKEY

A Time of Common Speech

THE MOST RECENT TIME I MET PHILIP WHALEN was on Powell Street, a block down from Geary, in San Francisco. We agreed to have lunch together, and as we walked up the block, we talked about confrontations that had just been taking place at San Francisco State College. One of us—I can't remember who—used the word "revolution," at which a tiny lady walking beside us suddenly turned and shouted at us: "Do you know what comes after the revolution?" "Certainly, Madam," Philip said, bowing formally toward her, "the repression." And toward a Japanese restaurant (where his expertise with chopsticks depressed me) he walked composedly on.

Now I have *On Bear's Head*,[1] the collected (though not the complete) body of poems, or single long continuous poem, that Philip must have been working on for longer than the twenty years that I have known him. And in these 400 pages, with their exceptional wealth and range, I find both the unexpectedness and the formality of that encounter on Powell Street. That those two particular elements should come together strikes me as a curious and an instructive marriage, and one whose nature may, I think, extend beyond Philip's work into that of a number of other contemporary American poets.

For it seems to me that both here and elsewhere the pattern of much current American poetry depends not upon the long-continued possibility of the Romantic isolation of self and voice—the deliberately cultivated independence and even idiosyncrasy of style—but upon the acceptance of a poetic language that is shared and general. Of the changes that have taken place in recent American poetry I think this is the most serious and distinguishable, and I think it results in a poetry that is much closer in character to the work of the major English poets of the early eighteenth century than it is to either English or European models of the nineteenth century.

The question of voice is the first of the several elements that lead me to this conclusion. I doubt that it would be easy, or even possible, to smuggle a passage of Arnold into a poem of Browning's, and have the substitution escape detection. Independence and differentiation of voice is seen as a central part of the poetic. The point becomes more acute as we move forward in time. What, if anything, could be in-

[1] ON BEAR'S HEAD, *by Philip Whalen*. Harcourt, Brace & World and Coyote. Paperback (Harvest Books). $3.95. The unusual conjunction of publishers seems to support my argument.

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terchanged in the work of Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, Dylan Thomas, Edith Sitwell? Our real sense of these people as poets depends (to the extent that parody and even self-parody is possible) on the existence of a uniquely distinguishable voice.

But of course it wasn't always that way. The poetry of Pope—that most exultant edifice of light and air in the English language—depends not upon idiosyncrasy, but upon making the most successful and entire statement of a poetic diction and understanding that poets of the period generally share. Poetry of the Augustan period is very frequently communal. *The Dunciad* depends in part on the "hints" Pope solicited and received from his friends; *The Beggar's Opera* has its genesis in a "hint" from Swift; *Gulliver's Travels* is prefixed by a number of ingenious dedicatory poems by Pope; Addison directs the re-writing of Swift's *Baucis and Philemon,* and Swift is prepared, though perhaps a little sullen about it, to accept the compliment of the criticism. This agreement on a common poetic language, which any man who presumes himself a poet will try to speak, reaches very far; even when Stephen Duck, "The Thresher Poet," became a popular figure in literary circles, he did not try to write in an absolute thresher's language. He saw a normative language of poetry and followed it, and it does not appear that he thought there was anything else to do.

I think that many of the qualities of this normative and common poetic language can also be seen in *On Bear's Head.* First of all, the language is personal and occasional, and sensitive to its exact location:

> Hot sunny morning, Allen and Gary, here they come, we are ready.
> Sutras in creek-bed, chants and lustrations, bed of Redwood Creek
> John Muir's Woods.

Let us compare this to Thomas Sheridan, in a poem written to Swift:

> I've sent to the ladies this morning, to warn 'em
> To order their chaise, and repair to Rathfarnham;
> Where you shall be welcome to dine, if your Deanship
> Can take up with me, and my friend Stella's leanship.

The tone is different, but the similarities are greater than the differences. Both poems respect certain assumptions: that a poet should name (rather than making abstract or divine or symbolic) the people he is with, the place he is at, the time of day and the time of year it is, and what exactly it is that is happening. Philip respects this exactitude to the extent that each poem is dated, and when it has been revised or completed later, the revision is also dated. There is a central consideration here: to be real, poetry must derive its authority from a real life.

To effect that end, it follows that the poetry must be various in the

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experiences it discusses, and must vary its tone widely to respond to the differing nature of those experiences. Philip assumes, as I don't think Arnold did, that a poem can be funny:

PARANOIA REVISITED

I see in the mirror, these mornings
That I'm now completely mad:
Ambition, fear and rage look back at me . . .

I suppose that noise was only the man next door
Feeding his rabbit.

Let me compare that tone with the tone of Swift, in a passage from "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift":

AND, then their Tenderness appears,
By adding largely to my Years:
"He's older than he would be reckon'd,
"And well remembers *Charles* the Second.

"HE hardly drinks a Pint of Wine;
"And that, I doubt, is no good Sign.
"His Stomach too begins to fail:
"Last Year we thought him strong and hale;
"But now, he's quite another Thing;
"I wish he may hold out till Spring."

In each instance the poetry is colloquial and occasional, and it is also dependent on the presence of domestic objects: the rabbit, the pint of wine. Such a poetic assumes not only the occasion, but that the occasion is continuous. The poetry of Prior and Gay, for example, supposes that virtually any experience is accessible to it: poetry does not begin or end when a man goes either to bed or to the bathroom. Sexual, scatalogical, lyric, moral—there is a continuous spectrum of experience and a continuous spectrum of poetic language prepared to greet it:

FRAGMENT OF GREAT BEAUTY & STILLNESS

I thought that if I read Homer a little
while before going to sleep, I could lie in
the dark hearing the sound of waves breaking
on the shore and the cry of seagulls and
feel hot sun on my back and wind blow
in my ear. I might see my shadow flat on
the sand beside me among the shallow
ripples and rills, thin smooth heavy
edge of the sea, light in varying densities
make the wrinkled waters look thick as honey.

This poem interests me particularly because it so clearly suggests

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what the range is of a poetic that—like the Augustan—is based on common speech. I would think of English poetry as having a rough but radical division: a poetry of speech and a poetry of song. Romantic poetry should finally be sung. It really *does* try to approximate to the condition of music, and thus its effect will often be narcotic, denying the possibilities of definition and distinction. Think of *The Lotos Eaters;* think (if thought has still any meaning or activity in those circumstances) of Swinburne. Objects and definitions melt; Keats's immortal bird may not have been born for death (a melting statement in itself) but it surely was not born for syllogism.

I find "Fragment of Great Beauty & Stillness" particularly helpful, then, in defining the lyrical possibilities of a poetic that does not start with a detachable lyric assumption. "I thought that if I read Homer a little" is the necessary occasion of the poem; its anchor. From that occasion it is possible to reach as far as "light in varying densities/make the wrinkled waters look thick as honey." The feel of these last lines is to me lyric, but because their origin is in common speech and common observation, they are not *transcendentally* lyric: it is their intention to celebrate an object, rather than to subsume it by an absolute either of emotion or sound. The term "lyric" is dependent always on some musical analogy. I am myself prepared to find formal talk musical, epigrams musical; but of course that music is of Campion or of Purcell; it is not Wagner or Mahler, not music of the totally dissolving, totally symphonic sort.

There is another important way in which Philip's poetry can be compared to that of the Augustans: it is learned, and the kind of learning it has extends principally in history and in time. When I think of the work of a poet like Wallace Stevens, the time extension does not seem to be a central one to me: he is not much to Hecuba nor Hecuba much to him. But Philip has the Augustans' capacity to be haunted by time, and the additional problem of being haunted not only by Lucretius, but also by the T'ang Dynasty. In considering the contrast between personal and social poetry, I think it is worthwhile to note that Pope, revising two of Donne's *Satires,* changes every image that extends in space, that is large geographically, to an image that extends in time. Space exists for him as a moment along a line in time. For all of Philip's geographical motion and location, and even in view of the fact that his most successful recent work has been written in Japan, I think he shares Pope's sense of the necessity of a place limitation, a grotto, a small room in which to write. Against this solidity and limitation of place the time line can be released, and argue for the interdependence of ideas, responses, civilizations:

TO THE MOON

O Moon!
Gradually

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Milo of Croton
Lifting all the seas
indifferently
Leaf shadows & bright reflections
simultaneously

The last comparison I would like to make here is between a passage from "The Rape of the Lock" and a poem of Philip's, which I choose not because it is framed on my study wall and signed in Philip's formal calligraphy, but because I think it suggests as Pope suggests the reach and syntactical complexity of a poetic that can be founded on common speech. From Pope:

He summons strait his Denizens of Air;
The lucid Squadrons round the Sails repair:
Soft o'er the Shrouds Aerial Whispers breathe,
That seem'd but *Zephyrs* to the Train beneath.
Some to the Sun their Insect-Wings unfold,
Waft on the Breeze, or sink in Clouds of Gold.
Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,
Their fluid Bodies half dissolv'd in Light.

And from *On Bear's Head,* this poem, which seems to me to share a number of the essential qualities of Pope:

GODDESS

Where I walk is with her
In fire between the ocean waves
Towards that Lady I stand beside
Center of the earth in the center of the air
Stand moving star cloud
Roar music silence
Waves break over our muddy heads
Dash against our sunny feet

I don't have space here, and I don't really have knowledge enough to explore this poetry of common speech as completely as I would like to. Some of its derivations are clear: its colloquial subjects might come easily from Gay or from William Carlos Williams; the abrupt logic of its relationships, the omission of middle terms, from Eastern verse or through transmitters and energizers like Pound. Excellently or indifferently, it is the poetry students I encounter in writing classes write now; it is where their tongues are, though they are not often able to make their speech as spare and as exactly recorded as Philip can.

Finding so much of this kind of poetic language in classes, I ought not, then, to be surprised at finding that poets as diverse as Rolfe Humphries and John Logan feel the necessity to give at the end of

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their books[2] precise notes about the genesis or location of particular poems: notes which place the poem along the line of the poet's personal experiences, or along the line of his developing considerations of technique. That I am more surprised to find the notes in Humphries' book is I suppose because I am still held by a residual Victorian assumption that intricacy of metric and rhyme is not consonant with the choice of colloquial image—that intricate language relationships are really designed to distance the immediate world from our view. Yet here is Humphries with a very lively and contemporary sense of exactly those rigorous forms, in a note:

> *28. Ballade and Sonnet.* Both, using the same theme, stick close to the demands of the form, but there is an attempt at a more high-power implication.

The first part of that sentence walks, but the second *jumps*. It is again the fusion of formality and unexpectedness, and a fusion we supposedly have little right to expect from a poet who was born in 1894, from a final and posthumous book. The poverty of our suppositions is quickly denied, as in the second part of the poem "Camano Island," describing the sound a particular bird makes:

> Not really yawp, though; more like a giggle, or string
> Of giggles in quick sequence—*bleep, bleep, bleep, bleep, bleep*—
> All dots, no dashes, cacchination's ghost
> Singing (or so it thinks) itself to sleep,
> A giggle's echo, on that lonely coast,
> In dark and vain regret,
> "Close folded now is every weary wing"—
> I wonder what acoustics you would get
> Playing it backward on your recording set?

At this time, as his note tells us, Humphries is up in Philip's and my Northwest, and it may be that the special poetic atmosphere of the area has got to him. But in other poems, in a pattern of poetry that directs itself toward some of the most complex Celtic forms, the extreme variations of vocabulary (from giggles to cacchination), the presence as a poetic possibility of mere sound (bleep, bleep)—these argue a very open poetic language. Even when Humphries engages himself in a form as technically elaborate as the Welsh triads, he persistently returns to immediate colloquial objects:

> A pig in a poke
> Is a juvenile joke:
> A fraud and a freak

[2] COAT ON A STICK: LATE POEMS, *by Rolfe Humphries.* Indiana University Press, $4.50. THE ZIGZAG WALK: POEMS 1963-1968, *by John Logan.* E. P. Dutton, $5.95.

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Not even funny.
Three are the powers
Each man desires:
Muscles like Mars,
Mad mirth, more money.

The language of Humphries' book interests me a little more than the substance of it, but that seems natural enough: he is a poet who already knows who he is, and in this book is working out more exact ways to say that. The most important thing the book suggests is the uselessness of many arguments about organic form. Regularity or irregularity of form, measured in feet or strophes, is not really to the point: Donne writes organic sonnets and so does George Barker; Sidney Lanier doesn't. Whether the form is fixed or improvised, what we have always to consider is whether there is a beat, a recognizable rhythmic pattern in the language, and whether that beat is used in some counterpoint with the subject. In Philip's book colloquial language is moved into new patterns of formality; in Humphries' book old patterns accommodate new sense. In either case, the dance figure, the serious tension and rhythm of poetic language is maintained.

The notes to Logan's poems are not as technical as those that Humphries includes: "San Francisco Poem names the aquatic pier in the marina there. Point Lobos extends into the sea near Carmel, California, and Partington Cove is in the Big Sur area near the Hot Springs, California."

This says nothing, to be sure, about technique, and yet its intention seems similar to the intention of Humphries' notes: to be locative, to domesticate the relationship between the poem and the reader, to use whatever kind of religious force it is that specifically household gods can give:

You came to my house
just separated from your life,
your clothes still burning in the chimney
(fires tended by furious women),
books piled or bent ("She has made
me stupid," you said)
or lost. Dishes in boxes, smashed.
Pieces of your life gaped from paper sacks.
Shelves were stripped like flesh,
letters from your friends destroyed—
family scowling, all utterly annoyed.
Who was to blame?
Your marriage already gone
at twenty-one,
you said, "I have abandoned myself," and wept.

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It would be easy to think of this as a poetic largely unformalized, until we encounter the rhyme of "destroyed/annoyed." But once we have noticed that, the density of other devices reveals itself: the "s" alliteration in a phrase like "Dishes in boxes, smashed." Again experience is encountering a formality, and it is interesting again to note that the confrontation expresses itself in musical form.

It is, I think, the quality of direct revelation and vulnerability, the strength of being able to present the *coeur mis à nu,* that endears Logan to his students and makes them write poems dedicated to him, as they often do. But it is not that quality of the Dionysian victim that I find most interesting in his work. It is rather the fact that he has written two *preludes* for La Push, a small town on the Olympic Peninsula that I have loved for a long time because it seemed to have the most stolid possible name. It is presumably easy to write preludes about Delphi, or about the ranges of the Karakorum—but La Push? Again I think Logan is sensing, as Philip does, the possibility of a source of music in the most prosaic object, is turning deliberately to the most prosaic name because, if it can be released into a poetic context at all, the energy will be less familiar and more intense.

Logan's book is one to which I can for once apply the word "uneven" without feeling that I'm copping out. The book really is written in several different poetic languages. The first of these, and to me by far the least interesting, is the language that turns up when Logan is translating, or writing a poem *after* some other poet:

> The moon stepped like a dead thing
> Out of a blue cave,
> And many flowers
> Flutter all along the rocky path.

The language becomes more lively when the subject of the poem is not another poem (that debilitating incest of language reproducing language) but a work of art of a different kind, as in this poem on a painting by Morris Graves:

> I'm the ugly, early
> Moor Swan of Morris Graves.
> I'm ungainly. I've got
> black splotches on my back.
> My neck's too long.
> When I am dead and gone
> think only of the beauty of my name.
> Moor Swan Moor Swan Moor Swan.

There the object is told to dissolve into language, into pure sound, but it refuses to do so. No pattern of reiteration will allow us to forget the black splotches, the too-long neck. This passage is inter-

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mediate; for its fullest effectiveness, Logan's poetry requires that the real things dominate the literary references, that first attention be given to a primary object, and only a glancing attention to any other person's perception of the object. Here, as an example of this kind of poetry, is one of the "Thirteen Preludes for Pioneer Square":

> 11. The great, garish
> painted concrete parking garage
> fills in
> across the street from the ancient building
> where Bartleby worked and grew wary.
> Its ruined lower halls have formed a marble quarry,
> The upper floors are rich with pigeon shit,
> and on a kitchen shelf still squats
> the hunched up skeleton of a cat.

The succession of these three quotations might almost serve as a pocket history of contemporary poetry. The first passage is symbolist. It does not depend upon a location in objective reality, and it both loses and gains from that refusal, because it becomes more musically elevated and more solipsistic. The second passage is uneasy: it recognizes the need to let physical substance come in, warts and all, but it can contemplate that substance only through the defense of a secondary medium: the painting. Only in the final passage do we see primary experience as central, and as soon as we do see it as central, we are also released to see its resonances in past experience, or in literary or artistic understandings of experience.

In the poetry of Yeats or Eliot, the most important thing we can learn is an understanding not of this physical world, but of a metaphysical one. The passages I have quoted from Logan seem to move steadily from that metaphysical understanding to a sense of reality that is based almost entirely on our perceptions of the physical world.

How have we moved from one of these positions to the other? Trying to understand the history of that difference, I have turned to W. H. Auden's most recent book, *City Without Walls*.[3]

At first glance, the work of Auden, Isherwood, MacNeice would seem to provide an immediate pattern for the shared poetry of a common speech that I have been talking about. There is a group of writers closely connected with one another, sharing some patterns of language, even writing books together—much of the Augustan pattern would seem to be realized. And certainly Auden and his friends introduce into English poetry both terms and objects that would have been offensive or incomprehensible before. As brief a phrase as "O all the instruments agree" reminds us of what Auden

[3] CITY WITHOUT WALLS, by *W. H. Auden*. Random House. $4.50.

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introduced to English poetry: the world of science, the world of the unconscious, the world of the machine.

And yet, as I look at this late book, written now when Auden is sixty, I don't see the relation to a poetry of common speech that I would have expected. When the language of special trades was admitted to poetry, it should have made poetry more general; instead it seems to have made it more technical.

Perhaps I can make the point by comparing passages from Tennyson and Auden, both formidable technicians:

> The splendour falls on castle walls
> And snowy summits old in story:
> The long light shakes across the lakes,
> And the wild cataract leaps in glory.

> "A key to the street each convict has,
> but the Asphalt Lands are lawless marches
> where gangs clash and cops turn
> robber-barons: reckless he
> who walks after dark in that wilderness.

Both of these passages seem to me to demonstrate a similar sense of the writer's concern with the domination and manipulation of language. There is a kind of splendid insolence about them, as they suggest (quite truthfully) that they can do things we cannot do.

But this demonstration of technical virtuosity, when it is applied to language, must finally lead us away from our sources in common speech. Auden begins by introducing into poetry objects that are validated by our common sense of them. But as the objects become more exotic, their relationships more aloof, that sense of understanding and participation may fail. Starting with a vocabulary very unlike that of the Symbolists, Auden seems to me finally to produce a sense of symbolist enclosure, in which names talk to names:

> cool Hymen from Jealousy's
> teratoid phantasms,
> sulks, competitive headaches,
> and Pride's monologue
> that won't listen but demands
> tautological echoes,
> ever refrain you.

It is true that Auden shares many of the forms, and the whole sense of form as a major consideration, of the Augustans. What he does not seem to share is their moments of whole connection, when common speech reaches its greatest intensity. Here again is Pope:

> Far as Creation's ample range extends,
> The scale of sensual, mental powr's ascends:

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> Mark how it mounts, to Man's imperial race,
> From the green myriads in the peopled grass:
> What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
> The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam . . .

Auden is instead a poet of conscious limits, whose invocation is not to Jove but to Terminus, the god of edges, of distinctions, of boundaries:

> In this world our colossal immodesty
> has plundered and poisoned, it is possible
> You still might save us, who by now have
> learned this: that scientists, to be truthful,
>
> must remind us to take all they say as a
> tall story, that abhorred in the Heav'ns are all
> self-proclaimed poets who, to wow an
> audience, utter some resonant lie.

In its breadth of vocabulary, that passage seems to me to assert the validity, in poetry, of common speech, even though it is not itself an example of such speech. Auden stands perhaps as Spenser did: opening the vernacular to a very great range of expression by including obsolete words, inventing new formations, borrowing from languages which had not previously been thought of as accessible to poetry. That example, though it provides the channel for common speech to enter poetry, is still itself a slightly anomalous language—forceful, wide-ranging, but self-conscious: too aware of its extensions of the language to be entirely at ease among them. Auden opens the poetic vocabulary to the whole enormous English word-hoard, but he does not really open poetic language to current idiom, and perhaps he doesn't want to. It has remained for Philip Whalen and other poets to do this. The result has been good for poetry because poetry can say more now than it could fifty years ago. For all the carelessness and all the mistakes and all the stupidities, I think it is still the case that we are working with a larger and more personal art.

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ROGER SALE

Scholarly Books

HERE ARE FOUR BOOKS, ALL SCHOLASTIC, all about seventeenth-century poetry, all blessedly shorter than similar books were twenty years ago.[1] All but one, though, are still much too long, too repetitive, too obvious too much of the time; the apparent collapse of the scholarly article into the swamp of the "publishable" has resulted in books being written that once would or could have been essays. Reading Joan Grundy, Earl Miner, Louis L. Martz, and Ann E. Berthoff, I kept thinking of Leslie Stephen who, like them, is not a great critic, but whose Hours in a Library seem to have been better spent than theirs. In reading Stephen—or Bradley on Shakespeare or Arnold on the Romantics—it is often surprising how much gets said in a relatively small space, how free the writing is of the need to indicate over and over where this interpretation derives or differs from that of someone else. The scholars, though, are so aware of their fellows they often are distracted from looking at the poems. To read Miner or Mrs. Berthoff on Marvell's "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Faun" is to wonder where the poem went; lines are quoted, the poem seems the subject, but it isn't. By contrast Leslie Stephen, who seldom quotes or seems to be looking at anything directly, usually turns out to be looking quite hard at something particular. In what follows I would like to identify certain features about these books to show why there is something self-defeating about the whole enterprise of scholarly books like these—and they are representative of what is being done. The result will not be in the strict sense a review of any one book, for which I apologize in advance to the authors, but I hope in exchange to be able to point towards what could be done.

Two pages from the end of Joan Grundy's *The Spenserian Poets*, which is about Drayton, William Browne, Wither, and the Fletcher brothers, is an admirable assessment of these admittedly minor poets:

> The great want of the Spenserian poets, made all the more obvious through their imitation of Spenser, is creative power. This keeps them in the rank of minor poets, even though they are all capable of writing so well on occasion as to make the distinction between—"major" and "minor," if not meaningless, at least temporarily irrelevant. . . . They have considerable pictorial powers: Phineas

[1] THE SPENSERIAN POETS, by *Joan Grundy*. St. Martin's. $8.95. THE METAPHYSICAL MODE FROM DONNE TO COWLEY, by *Earl Miner*. Princeton University Press. $9.00. THE WIT OF LOVE, by *Louis L. Martz*. Notre Dame. $10.00. THE RESOLVED SOUL, by *Anne E. Berthoff*. Princeton University Press. $7.50.

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> Fletcher's figures in *The Purple Island* especially are well-drawn, clear, and vivid. But they remain static, iconographic, having, at most, the kind of life represented in Spenser by the Seven Deadly Sins or the procession of the Seasons.

Miss Grundy sees, as many have not, that if what you admire in *The Faerie Queene* is the static, iconographic processions, then Spenser is really no better than his followers, and she also implicitly shows all the limitations any confessed follower of any poet is liable to. This paragraph would have made an excellent opening to a short appreciation, but placed where it is, it barely counts. The commitment to write a book forced Miss Grundy into trying to "cover" her subjects, and this in turn kept her from finding the best poems and telling us how to admire them. Drayton is much the best of the group; everyone knows the fine moments in the sonnets, and C. S. Lewis has shown the way to the late lovely pastorals, but there is more to be claimed, and about the very long and never very interesting *Poly-Olbion* and *The Barons Warres,* on which Miss Grundy spends most of her time. We do not need to be told, though, what they are about or what they mean, or even what the best passages are, because they are too much of a piece to have extractable plums. There are, though, kinds of people, and, more important, particular moods we all have, that can respond to them, and Miss Grundy would have performed a very useful service in trying to identify these. She was bent on writing a "study" of the poets, though, so the essential job doesn't get done. Thoroughness, thus, turns into the enemy of precision.

Earl Miner's job in writing about the major metaphysical poets is quite different; we don't need to be told what the good Donne poems are, though we can always use careful analysis and acute judgment even of "The Extasie" and "Love" (III). But what Miner offers is only a rewriting of the many general books on the subject—Williamson's, Joan Bennett's, Alvarez's, Helen Gardner's—by means of using slightly different terms, like "the private mode" and "definition" to describe metaphysical tone and typical metaphor, to name qualities we have always recognized in these poets. Miner is often quite winning in his willingness to say what he most likes, or in his insistence that if you read Cowley very long you will not find a very good poet but a very nice man. When confronted with particular poems, however, Miner tends to go slack. One form of this I have already mentioned, a turning away from the poem to look at generic antecedents or the interpretations of earlier scholars. Another form is getting so set in his terms that poems are distorted to fit them. Here, for instance, Miner is anxious to show the Ovidian, anti-Petrarchan quality of Donne's love elegies:

> Sometimes, as in *To His Mistres Going to Bed,* the antagonism is translated into a male erotic vision of considerable power:
>
> License my roaving hands, and let them go,

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Behind, before, above, between, below.
O my America, my new-found land . . . (25-27)

That third line is so marvelous precisely because it renders eroticism into art and antagonism into the lyric thrill of discovery. There are other such lines, but it is an impatient cynicism that emerges at the end:

To teach thee I am naked first; Why than
What needest thou have more covering than a man.

The very high spirits seem to allow the woman no independent value.

No one mistakes the nineteenth elegy for Spenser or Sidney, no one seeks to make Donne the patron saint of women's liberation. To say that Donne tends to treat women as object just isn't news, and to say that "O my America, my new-found land" is "marvelous precisely because it renders eroticism into art" is to avoid asking what is so marvelous about this eroticism. Surely, of all Donne's more aggressive love poems this is the least antagonistic, the least whiny about his lust, the most designed to make the mistress a desirable object. Miner's general point about the elegies, which is true enough, need not have forced him to run roughshod over particular lines and poems in this way. Miner is a man we can all admire, especially for his work on Japanese literature, but I don't think he should have imagined he had a book in *The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley*.

Louis Martz's *The Wit of Love* is occasionally better, but often worse, and not enough of either to make much difference. These are four lectures given at Notre Dame, all lavishly illustrated, the whole totally unanimated by anything so strenuous as an idea; one cannot help thinking that if the professor from Yale were giving the Clark or the Norton lectures he would have tried harder. The one on Donne is particularly slapdash; the elegies are "indecent and outrageous," the last line of "The Funerall" ("That since you would save none of mee, I bury some of you") earns the stern professorial judgment that it "amounts to a rude innuendo." With Marvell he does little more than quote extensively from Arnold Hauser on Mannerism, an exercise saved only because the Hauser is quite good. With the less familiar Crashaw and Carew, Martz seems to feel he must work harder and so does better. The Carew lecture meanders for half its length with standard talk about Cavaliers, but then, in discussing Carew's poems on Donne and to Jonson, Martz shows what I think is the case about Carew, that he is "indeed one of the great critics of English literature," a judgment good enough and securely enough earned to let one forgive the incredible end of that sentence: "if he had been writing in our own day he would undoubtedly be known as one of the 'new critics.' " The lecture on Crashaw offers nothing original, but it is the only carefully wrought one of the four; it builds up a definition of baroque with both

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pictures and well chosen quotations: "the Baroque conceit does not explore: it rather views the same paradox or symbol from various angles, reviewing and revising and expanding the issue until some truth grows out from all that glittering elaboration." Though "grows out from" is exactly the wrong metaphor here, the point is made, and it allows Martz to account for both Crashaw's finest moments and for their being adjacent to some of his worst. Still, this essay says no more and is in most respects not as good as the one by Robert Martin Adams on Crashaw and Dylan Thomas which appeared in these pages fifteen years ago[2]; for that matter, Martz's point about Carew is really only an elaboration of Leavis' few paragraphs about him in *Revaluation*. What is really missing, from Martz, Miner, and Joan Grundy, is any sense that they are interested in becoming inward with the poems they write about, as Empson is with "A Valediction: of Weeping" in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* or as Arnold Stein is with "Mortification" in *George Herbert's Lyrics*. That these are very hard poems and that no amount of previous commentary should keep a critic from saying to himself and his audience what he thinks each line says and means, that these poets are admired precisely because they place such an obligation on their readers—that is what the scholiasts seem not to know or are uninterested in pursuing.

This charge might also be leveled at Ann Berthoff, but it can be done only more tentatively and after much more careful deliberation. Her *The Resolved Soul: A Study of Marvell's Major Poems* is the only one of these four books which really should have been a book, with which it is really profitable to disagree, the one that should have been longer, not shorter. After two readings I'm not sure I quite grasp all the implications of what Mrs. Berthoff is saying, nor am I quite sure she does either. The point, simply put, is that Marvell's imagination is allegorical and that his whole work is variations on the theme of the soul in its temporal conditions. Here is one of her statements about allegory:

> Interpretation of poetry in the allegorical mode requires something other than exegetical skill in reading figures in the context of their history. . . . Allegory, be it remembered, is *continued* metaphor. The narrative matrix cannot be discounted in interpreting particular scenes or persons or acts. Narration is, of course, often checked—by confrontation in which the dialogue is mysteriously general; by soliloquy or frankly open address to the audience, which, like an aria, interrupts the story. Such static moments are, I believe, emblematic in character. An emblem is a narrative moment from which the particular occasion has, to various degrees, been refined. Seen at a distance, the irrelevant details obscured, a huntsman stalking, a bold pirate boarding, a child weeping all become speaking pictures,

[2] THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. III, No. 4 (Winter 1956).

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> shapes which say the meaning of what the figures do; and what they do tells us what they are. The resultant abstractness facilitates application; indeed, it creates application.

Mostly, I think, this succeeds—despite what seems an unfortunate jargon—because it is scoring well against those who take what Mrs. Berthoff calls emblems, paste on a label, then make a structure of various labels and call it an interpretation of a poem. Earl Miner (and others) have gone to work on the Troopers in Marvell's "The Nymph Complaining" in just such a fashion. What Mrs. Berthoff has to offer positively can be glimpsed in another passage:

> His critical spirit invigorates because it is so confident, because it springs not from hatred but from despair, the only ground of action; not from resignation but from resolution. *Resolution* is the generative power as much of Marvell's acceptance of Cromwell as it is of the lover's recognition of the "rough strife" which is passion; or of the poet's definition of the love of his soul as the child of despair and impossibility; or of the Shepherd's discovery that grace is not to be reduced to "meer Morality." Love, heroic action, and contemplation are all modes of the mediating heart and mind, acts of the Resolved Soul confronting his fate, which is time. If separation is the condition, resolution is the predicate; the wedges that separate are the wedges that join. Marvell throughout his poetry confronts with resolute imagination the absolute contingency of freedom and necessity, transforming that philosophical conception into the drama, the "story," of the Resolved Soul.

What is helpful here to me is Mrs. Berthoff's way of weaving Marvell's abstractions into her own prose; when I come on a formulation like "his critical spirit springs not from hatred but from despair," I think someone is up to something and want to read on.

That the results of her inquiry are not altogether satisfactory can be traced to the fact that she is writing a scholarly book. Watching her saw up the lumber of previous critics and cart it away is all right; the real trouble is that she argues her point more narrowly and strictly than it deserves, or more stridently than it merits, because she is always implicitly setting herself up against others. For instance:

> The Nymph loses some of her innocence and the Lord Protector learns magnaminity; the willfully ignorant Shepherd is chastened and the Puritan exiles are redeemed; their experiences, their discoveries take time. The power of grace, the requirements of statecraft, the way of the world, the redemptive power of suffering—all that man learns of the nature of necessity is learned not by soulful introspection or by the dictates of faith, but through his experiences of temporality, his discoveries in the world of time.

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Mrs. Berthoff's precise way with abstract nouns is again telling, and shows us how we can link such apparently disparate poems as "The Nymph Complaining," "The Coronet," and the Cromwell pieces. As will happen, however, the linking causes some strain to the individual items. The phrase, "The Nymph loses some of her innocence," is based on the idea that the nymph is learning, first through the jilting by Silvio and then through the wantonness of the Troopers, the way of the world. This is all true, but it is also true that the Nymph is a very cloying figure, indulgent, accepting the consolations of self-pity after the death of the faun as readily and narcissistically as she accepted the faun after Silvio left. All this Mrs. Berthoff ignores because it doesn't fit her scheme. She quotes a line like "It onely loved to be there" and assumes that it means "The faun wanted to be there, with me, and no place else," which it does. It also means "Only the faun loved to be there, I really wanted to be in the false world of men." As so often in the poem, what the Nymph says and what the lines fully mean are two different things.

I think Marvell was frightened by the Nymph, even more than he was frightened by little T.C. Here again Mrs. Berthoff's theme forces her to stress the strength of the innocent and chaste girl/maiden as she abjures the snares of worldly lust, because T.C. is an emblem of the resolved soul. Thus, though she can say that the chastity of T.C. is tyrannous and that Marvell wants to "negotiate his own safety" from it, she can also end up saying "the burden of the warning seems to be not only that death can overtake the virtuous young, but that death conquers chasity." The tail is really wagging the dog now, for Mrs. Berthoff has to conclude there is something wrong with the poem: "as a warning directed to the child it is clearly inappropriate."

Here is the key stanza:

> O then let me in time compound,
> And parly with these conquering Eyes;
> Ere they have try'd their force to wound,
> Ere, with their glancing wheels, they drive
> In triumph over Hearts that strive,
> And them that yield but more despise.
> Let me be laid,
> Where I may see thy Glories from some shade.

Here is Mrs. Berthoff's comment:

> Since those wheels (eyes) will one day ride in triumph over hearts that strive (to woo her) and since she will disdain those who "yield" (to her diffidence, i.e. to give her up), it is prudent to be on her side, to "appease" her so as not to suffer oneself.

To read "yield" as "giving her up" is simply willful. It is the cruelty of the chaste maid to despise those who love, who do not give her up,

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more than those who stay out of the way. Though the last two lines of the stanza mean, "I hope I am dead by the time you grow up," they also mean, "If I am alive when you are grown, let me be off to the side when you drive those conquering wheels down the road." This "virtuous Enemy of Man" is frightening because unreconcilable to men, not a resolved soul spurning pleasure so much as a wanton tyrant herself. The poem is a plea for the retention of innocence placed against the firm knowledge that because it cannot be retained well, it should be lost well. But in this context what is most important is that Mrs. Berthoff's emphasis on her theme, in itself the product of the scholastic necessity of setting one idea up against others, seems to blind her to other ways of reading as good as hers.

I want to turn now to "The Garden," not just to reiterate this point, but to try to show how this bind of scholarship can be avoided. Mrs. Berthoff summarizes the first four stanzas of the poem, and introduces her reading of the fifth, as follows:

> But as long as the body is still fully alive to sensuous pleasure, the further benefits of solitiude, quiet, and innocence cannot be enjoyed. There must be a metamorphosis not of the object only but of passion itself, and to that end the body must first be brought low by a surfeit of delight.

To say only that "the body is still fully alive to sensuous pleasure" is to have ignored the wonderful wit of Marvell writing "Oak" on trees instead of "T.C." (a point Earl Miner does not forget to make), and of Apollo loving Daphne because what he really wanted was a Laurel. The perspective of "The Garden" allows Marvell to claim that he finds Innocence there, and that he wants innocence, but it is done by showing he knows the claim to be implausible. Next Mrs. Berthoff is nothing less than tight-lipped and puritanical when she says that the point about the ripe apples dropping about Marvell's head is that "the body must . . . be brought low by a surfeit of delight." That there is something comic about the fifth stanza is readily to be admitted, but not that "the poet escapes Nature by first succumbing to it." Nowhere I can see is there any indication that Marvell wants to escape nature. Rather, he is turning the apples, grapes, and melons into wonderful substitutes for women, and is convincing us that what he has here is wondrous, a kind of harem.

The crucial point is in the first two words of the sixth stanza: "Mean while the Mind, from pleasure less." Mrs. Berthoff is so very good on the ringing quality of the "therefore" in "The Definition of Love" that it was surprising to see her subverting Marvell's claims in that "Mean while." Marvell is not saying the body must have its fill first, so that the mind and the soul can then be free to enjoy their particular delights; rather, all these things are happening at once. But because she is committed to having the poet escape nature, Mrs. Berthoff must

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deny Margoliouth's reading of "Annihilating all that's made/To a green Thought in a green Shade":

> Margoliouth notes that annihilation can mean "either 'reducing the whole world to nothing material' . . . or 'considering the whole material world as of no value compared to a green thought'." But the double sense of annihilating is ironic, not ambiguous. Margoliouth's "either/or" ignores the paradox whereby creation is defined as the function of ruin, an expression of the metaphysical paradox that a death is precursor to life and, as well, of the psychological truth that the mind "dissolves, creates, and rears" in that order.

But neither Margoliouth nor Empson, who spun so much of his great reading out of Margoliouth's note, would deny Mrs. Berthoff's paradox; they would insist, rather, that the paradox is more profound than that. What Empson makes so compelling is the claim that you can have it both ways; that the mind can both take in the whole world ("streight its own resemblance find") and leave out the whole world ("creates, transcending these"); that you can know everything about life when you see it from the perspective of "The Garden" and you can know everything worth knowing by ignoring the world and having green thoughts; that the mind can be both totally innocent and totally experienced. And, to repeat a point made earlier, this can all be done while the curious peaches are reaching themselves into the hand and the soul is casting the body's vest aside. The point when seen that way has nothing to do with the mind vs. the body or nature vs. society; the claims Marvell makes in "The Garden" are vaster than anything claimed about the resolved soul.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that the claims are "unreal," "impossible." As a friend of mine once said, there is no garden there, for what can be claimed in language is simply unimaginable, for Marvell or us, anywhere else. Yet if we tried to think of someone who is or was in fact able to do what Marvell says is possible in "The Garden," our best choice would be, I think, Edmund Spenser. True, Spenser's mind is more an ocean where each kind does straight its own resemblance find than it is a creator of transcendent worlds and seas,—true but not so much so as to be decisive. Certainly no one could effect and celebrate the implications of Marvell's "Mean while" better than he could. Whether Marvell knew or believed this is not very important; what is important is that "The Garden" comes after the most decisive sixty years in England and English literature, so that what lies between "The Garden" and *The Faerie Queene* are the great explorers of the claims and terrors of the unresolved soul as it rends its way through a universe still received but no longer whole: Donne, Hamlet, Lear, Bosola, the Milton of "Lycidas" and the Herbert of "Affliction" (I). Compared to them, and here Mrs. Berthoff is exactly right, Marvell was a resolved soul; though, and again she is right, seldom able to say

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or know what, except in particular cases where choices had to be made, he was resolved about. But what Spenser could imagine and what he could believe to be true were one and the same; what Marvell could imagine in "The Garden" and what he could show the world to be like, in that poem and elsewhere, were metaphysically of two entirely different orders. History had happened, men could not be as they had been, and in whatever sense of the verb "to know" is most important, Marvell knew this. Just as the seventeenth-century Spenserians did not.

I do not mean in going on this way suddenly to change the subject. What I am suggesting is that Mrs. Berthoff and the others have got their context badly distorted. Miss Grundy, Miner, and Martz say a lot, some of it quite good, about traditions and influences of one poet on another: Spenser on Drayton, Jonson on Carew, Donne on Marvell. Mrs. Berthoff abjures this because she is interested in showing how Marvell is not like the other metaphysical poets. But what these scholars have is a notion of both originality and influence which is very much like their notion of their relation to earlier scholars. They see themselves as building on the past, admiring it, criticizing it, adding something to it. To them the state of our knowledge of the seventeenth-century poets was, however imperfect, complete or completable before they began writing; to them, therefore, it must also be complete or completable after they have finished. They have made a contribution, just as Carew made a contribution to our understanding of Jonson.

That is a way of saying it, but the wrong way. If I say Carew "contributed" to my knowledge of Jonson or that Mrs. Berthoff "contributed" to my knowledge of Marvell, I am treating my knowledge as a hoard, as something that can be built, that can be declared completed or at least completable. But I hope my mind is not like that, and I know Marvell's was not like that. Because history both happened and is happening, because the possibilities for living and writing poems and writing scholarly books are always changing, one's relation to the past and to one's knowledge of it has to be alert, shifting, ignorant, and above all as engaged as possible in asking why any of it matters. Marvell did not go around wondering where his individual talent stood in relation to the tradition; that relation was something he established by writing. He probably was quite self-conscious about earlier writers the way learned men usually are, but that self-consciousness was not something that dictated how he wrote his poems. Because it was a part of him it could not help becoming expressed, willy-nilly. The point about these scholarly books is not just that the elaborate machinery of taking account of earlier practitioners is clumsy or cumbersome or unnecessary; it is that whenever one writes directly and as well as one knows about a poem one will inevitably establish a relation with the past: poets, scholars, events. The whole enterprise of insisting on scholastic self-consciousness not only makes the relation of scholar to scholar more important than that of scholar to poem

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a good deal of the time, not only involves restricting tactics or manners, it dictates the very way one states what one sees and knows. The fault is not simply rhetorical; it is ultimately epistemological. When anyone, scholar, poet, or whatever, is good, he forces me to be myself in a somewhat different way, but he almost always becomes good by caring more, and more directly, about his subject than about me. That is why I enjoy disagreeing with Ann Berthoff because when I do I feel I am talking about Marvell, and why I don't enjoy disagreeing with the other three scholars because when I do I am concerning myself only with them.

W. Jackson Bate has just published a series of lectures called *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet.*[3] It is a very thoughtful history of the way literary people, beginning with the Restoration, wondered if there was anything left to be said, and of the ways found by the deepest thinkers, men like Dr. Johnson and Coleridge, to lift some of the burden of the past. Bate finds in effect an original way to approach the paradox that there *always* is a race of gaints before the flood and there *always* is the fact that we know so much more than the men of the past because they are what we know. What the four other scholars in question—and, I would contend, what almost all scholars in this country—have lost sight of is that that paradox is the most exciting and invigorating one we can know. Bates's last sentence is as follows:

> In the experience of the eighteenth century we have exemplified—if we choose to look at it with a "greeting of the spirit"—what the old epigram said of Plato (something I have often thought applies to Johnson): that, in whatever direction you happened to be going, you met him on his way back.

What Bate feels about Johnson I have often felt about Empson, and sometimes that feeling, for me at least, is a burden. But we *can choose* to meet someone "on his way back" with a "greeting of the spirit," and then the past is not heavy, not a hoard, a complete or completable building. Indeed, I think Mrs. Berthoff's major point about Marvell is that he was a greeter of the spirit, and what she says is his lesson about love is really the only lesson I know about literary scholarship:

> The lesson in love that the poet reads his coy mistress reminds us that resolution can make Bannerets of unfortunate lovers in the sublunary tournaments. Love is like the sun: it has the power to destroy and to fructify; it is strong and it is sweet. Love is the creation of sweetness out of strength, and sweetness makes the lover strong.

[3] THE BURDEN OF THE PAST AND THE ENGLISH POET, by *W. Jackson Bate*. Harvard University Press. $5.95.

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Tones of Criticism

HERE ARE SEVEN BOOKS OF ESSAYS, reviews, "open letters to" and other occasional writings, all printed earlier. None of them is without interest and intelligence; each, at one point or another, serves the central function of criticism by jogging us into a fresh look, or the promise we will take a fresh look at, another novelist or poet or cultural issue. There is little point in making much of one's sometime wonder in reading these collections—except for Jarrell's and Mary McCarthy's—why the writer reprinted *that* piece, any more than there is point to sighing about how, in 1970, we really don't need to read A. Alvarez reviewing Ken Tynan's nine-year-old collection of his nine-year-old theater reviews. Admittedly we don't, but that's the way life is and books are often put together; it is surely more boring to hear about how superior your humble reviewer is to such behavior. By their best work we shall know them. But also, on a more superficial level, by their titles, which are a fine guide to the kinds of personalities and critical tones informing them.

Titular analysis doesn't come up with much subtle in regard to Katherine Anne Porter's large assemblage[1] so we turn for help to the back jacket and a beautifully colored photograph of an attractive lady in a splendid hat, after which it becomes entirely natural that she should have collected even her most occasional writings. One reads these pages largely out of respect for the imaginative intelligence which produced "Old Mortality," "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," and "Holiday." When Miss Porter says of Katherine Mansfield that "She was magnificent in her objective view of things, her real sensitiveness to climate, mental or physical, her genuinely first-rate equipment in the matter of the five senses . . ." and that "Mistakenly she fought in herself those very elements that combined to form her main virtue: a certain grim, quiet ruthlessness of judgment, an unsparing and sometimes cruel eye, a natural malicious wit, an intelligent humor. . . ." she may more importantly have been describing herself. Except that Katherine Anne Porter has not suppressed those elements of ruthlessness and a sometimes cruel eye which are too simply there in *Ship of Fools* but most satisfyingly there in many of the stories, and in the essays on Hardy and on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in this collection.

The Hardy essay (written in 1940) is an able, perceptive defense of him against T. S. Eliot's slur in *After Strange Gods*. More controversially, the piece on Lawrence, titled "A Wreath for the Gamekeeper"

[1] THE COLLECTED ESSAYS AND OCCASIONAL WRITINGS OF KATHERINE ANNE PORTER. Delacorte Press. $12.50.

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(1960), is filled with outrage at *Lady Chatterley* being hailed as, among other things, "a great hymn to marriage" (Mark Schorer) to which Miss Porter replies:

> That, I should say, it is not, above all. No matter what the protagonists think they are up to, this is the story of an "affair," and a thoroughly disreputable one, based on the treachery of a woman to her husband who has been made impotent by wounds received in war; and by the mean trickery of a man of low origins out to prove he is as good as, or better than, the next man.

Her good sense has the virtue of recalling us to what actually happens in the novel before we began to rename things more nobly; she is also fine on Lawrence's "mischievous curiosity" which won't allow a woman even the privacy of her excremental functions: "He has to tell her in as many words just where her private organs are located, what they are good for, and how praiseworthy he finds the whole arrangement." Recalling Yeats's line about love having pitched his mansion in the place of excrement, Miss Porter calls this a "sunny truth" and reminds us that "Yeats had already learned, long before, in his own experience that love has many mansions and only one of them is pitched there." After sentences like these scattered throughout the book, it is painful to have to accept that the critic could also praise Edith Sitwell's poetry as "the true flowering branch sprung fresh from the old, unkillable roots of English poetry" and as possessing "the passion and elegance of great art." No quiet ruthlessness of judgment here, nor malicious wit, nor intelligent humor. But the exception proves the rule: one doesn't have to be interested in all these occasional writings to appreciate the superb intelligence of them at their best.

From Katherine Anne Porter to Seymour Krim: the story of our wonderful crazy loveable American literary scene in a nutshell. Reaching for that dreary term "mixed bag" to characterize Krim's collection[2] would be wrong, for it is all one unmixed bag, in fact Seymour's bag. The title immediately became a password in our house where my son has developed an admirably high tone with which he instructs me, a hopeful smartass, to shake it for the world, and we repeat the injunction to one another in moments of despair. Dan Wakefield, on a publicity blurb, likes the title so much he hopes that this "wily smartass" will shake it even harder next time. As with Miss Porter, there is a picture of Mr. Krim, I take it, in what might be his pad or *a* pad. At any rate some wily smartass or other lies stretched out flat on the sack with a few rough blankets thrown over him and his eyes closed, arm crooked around head, thinking of perhaps shaking it for the world with another open letter to Norman Mailer. Krim's belief is that we "all share a common bag as probably never

[2] SHAKE IT FOR THE WORLD, SMARTASS, by *Seymour Krim*. Dial Press. $6.95.

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before" and that reporters and pamphleteers such as S. Krim are telling it like it is and doing the work it was once thought only the novelist could do. With these "new communicators"—Krim provides a list of them beginning with Mailer, running through Tom Wolfe, Ned Rorem and Dan Wakefield—the rationale for telling it like it is is found in a sincerely-asked question: "How can we suffer from too much truth? Who isn't heartened to see it when an author respects us enough to tell us where he really lives . . . and by the very nature of his writing asks us to reciprocate." It doesn't occur to Krim that the question isn't exactly a rhetorical one; that for example the following list of new communications may not strike everyone as inevitably fine things to hear about:

> . . . himself, his friends, his women (or men if he's gay), people in public life, the cities, the war, his group therapy, wanting secretly to be a star, wanting to sleep with Mamie Van Doren (or Susan Sontag), still hoping to love and be loved, putting his being directly before the reader as if the page were a telephone and asking for an answer. . .

Picking up the telephone I should reciprocate with the writer by pointing out that most of the items in the list weren't too fresh but that, yes, sleeping with Mamie Van Doren is an undeniably fine idea though one would want to check out the Sontag item a bit further. What makes Seymour Krim good slovenly company is that his monolithic ideas about Writing The Truth, and all the boring cant at present to be heard even in small New England college classrooms about telling it like it is, not copping-out etc., that these "ideas" are inadequate to the sudden outcropping of Mamie Van Doren in the preceding paragraph. In such a moment of noble possibility group therapy is forgotten.

So Krim is better than his ideas. You get used to him confessing in a touching metaphor to Nat Hentoff that "journalism seems right now to have stolen fiction's cherry"; and you are quite ready to agree that "Jan Cremer at the age of 25 can rank unashamedly as the brazen illegitimate son of . . . such Big Daddies of imaginative autobiography as [Celine, Miller, Genet, Gorki]"—even though you remember Jan Cremer as a crashing bore, the list of Big Daddies does it. In the chef d'oeuvre of the book, "Ubiquitous Mailer vs. Monolithic Me," Krim confronts the real terror of his life, the fact that he didn't grow up to be the novelist he had planned to become when he was one of the "shrimpy, titless, thicklensed, crazyheaded dropouts and sore losers of American youth resolving in the utter misery of the dateless Saturday nights to shoot down their better-favored peers in the pages of a novel." If not a novelist he is at least a New Communicator, one of the group led by Mailer that has stolen fiction's cherry. The maddening thing is that Mailer is a novelist as well, so the following vignette takes on real poignancy:

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> I had a good chance of getting planked one night about three weeks ago, I was looking forward to it because the girl was dark-eyed, salty and keen, quick to judge and flaring in opinion but this seemed merely to open up wider the potential excitement of rocketing with her, when she started to rave about Mailer's *Barbary Shore*. *Barbary Shore*! The novel is 17 years old and I have never done it justice; it struck me as a failure when I read three-fifths of it in 1951, a potentially fascinating probe into the shadowland of ex-communism but novelistically a fallen weight, and now this hip young literary snatch was carrying on about it in a way that would have offended Mailer himself.

Except that Mailer, swallowing his offense, might have done something with the opportunity for literary instruction of the salty girl; whereas Krim is left with nothing more than the resolve to look at *Barbary Shore* again so he can be a better Mailer scholar. But perhaps the "monolithic me" isn't all that monolithic after all. Not just any writer can tell this kind of story on himself, and Krim is perfectly right in his judgment of Mailer's novel, which though it indeed becomes a fallen weight three-fifths of the way through, is still "potentially fascinating" and has been looked at by few of us recently except the young literary snatch. For all Krim's talk about Truth it may be that at his best he falls into Art after all—comic art.

Imagine the good-hearted American host who, finding that A. Alvarez, Stuart N. Hampshire and Richard Hoggart were simultaneously in town to attend publishers' parties on the occasion of their recent collections,[3] decided that, being English, they would have a lot in common and might like to get together for a chat. No doubt good manners would make it possible, but I wager against it turning into memorable conversation. Alvarez is extremely flexible, could hold his own with Katherine Anne Porter or Seymour Krim, would be an excellent reviewer of each's work. The sharp unillusioned title of his volume allows the reader to "dislike it," to be beyond all the fiddle of collected reviews and essays as well as of poetry, while at the same time assenting to another epigraph (from Harold Rosenberg) about how criticism must be partial and polemical if it is to help art get beyond fiddle. Alvarez has already written two useful books of criticism on modern poetry and on the school of Donne, and one returns to the essays in *Stewards of Excellence* (on Stevens, Hart Crane, Lawrence and others) for the partial, forceful way they put the case with due qualification for or against the individual poet. Probably Alvarez's single big idea, of the sort Krim has about the New Communicator, is his belief that English poetry to save itself must move "beyond the

[3] BEYOND ALL THIS FIDDLE, by *A. Alvarez*. Random House. $8.95. MODERN WRITERS AND OTHER ESSAYS, by *Stuart N. Hampshire*. Knopf. $5.95. SPEAKING TO EACH OTHER: Volume I, About Society; Volume II, About Literature, by *Richard Hoggart*. Oxford University Press. $6.50 and $7.50.

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gentility principle" and become "serious" as Americans like Lowell and Berryman and Sylvia Plath are; that is, psychologically serious about extreme spiritual states. Standing in the way of this effort, somewhat as Eliot stood in Hart Crane's way, is Philip Larkin who turns his back on all that alienated jazz, choosing instead "a kind of suburban hermitage, with plenty of books and records, bottled beer in the cupboard and all mod. con." with a motto on the wall that reads "You'll never have it any better." Alvarez must feel mainly contempt and annoyance for this choice, yet he doesn't allow the feelings to stamp out his recognition of Larkin's poetic excellence, the way his verse is kept alive by imagining "the life he never quite had, the life of chance and risk, marriage and movement"; and he names accurately the "depressed tenderness" that makes Larkin's poems memorable. I suppose your feelings about Alvarez involve the particular balance of suspicion-admiration-contempt you accord a reviewer who can talk well, though sometimes glibly, for the short stretch on poets, cinema, Hungarian short stories, Oxford, Dashiell Hammett, mountain climbing in New Mexico. To tip the balance toward admiration, read his memorial tribute to R. P. Blackmur, then proceed as your taste directs.

Stuart N. Hampshire is a very different kettle of fish, a Princeton philosopher so far from England that he can use his middle initial without embarrassment or some editor cutting it out. *Modern Writers and Other Essays* is one of your titles without a kicker in it; and in describing George Eliot's procedure as a reviewer Hampshire makes clear where his own preferences lie. George Eliot's audience, he says,

> . . . would not need to be entertained, sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph, by an anxious author who, like a cabaret performer, has his bright eye always fixed upon his audience to detect the first sign of restlessness. Her readers would stay with her until the end, waiting for the sober truth and for her summing-up.

Hampshire is also committed to the sober title, the sober truth and summing-up, in these twenty-odd reviews of modern writers and their works; and like George Eliot he is interested in connecting the individual style with its philosophical assumptions on the hypothesis that their sources are one:

> It [the hypothesis] can be found in other writers who cross, and re-cross, the line that is supposed to divide the kind of literary imagination, which is turned toward self-exploration and moral discovery, from philosophical ideas, which are necessarily abstract and general:

And Hampshire continues with a list of writers from Pater to Büchner to Ibsen and Freud who illustrate the connection. Already restless, in no danger of being entertained by this prose, I castigate my weak-

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ness and straighten my tie. There is nothing Hampshire has not read nor, so far as I can see from this collection, nothing that by the end of the review he has not understood fully, with never a loose end left or unanswered question raised.

This toneless, oppressive, disciplined air has its virtues, fairly represented by a paragraph from an excellent review of Painter's life of Proust:

> There is no comparable instance in modern literature of a writer discovering his own genius, late in life, through the discovery of a theory of the mind and of personality, and then exercising this genius, and illustrating the theory, by representing his earlier, uncreative life as a progress under destiny towards this discovery. It is as if the insights and intellectual excitement to be found in Flaubert's letters had been woven into the texture of *Madame Bovary*, or of *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, instead of their being merely applied in these works. . . .

At other times, for example in the lead essay on Auden's *Collected Shorter Poems*, Hampshire is so busy soberly praising, without the ghost of a qualification, the poet's continuous achievement, that what has surely struck most readers—the number of poems Auden has excluded from his work or pruned almost out of recognition—elicits only Hampshire's approval of such revising as a disinfecting: "Any speck of mere poetic rhetoric which he has noticed he has removed." Whereas Alvarez, in his review of the same volume, feels like complaining a bit by questioning Auden's claim that he has thrown out poems which were dishonest or bad-mannered or boring:

> So "Sir, no man's enemy," a minor masterpiece, has gone because it was "dishonest." So, too, has "Spain, 1937," because, he says, the last line "equates goodness with success." I wonder. Mightn't the reason be that it is also, embarrassingly, a young revolutionary poem? How about the brilliant "Gold in the North":
>
> Some think they're strong, some think they're smart,
> Like butterflies they're pulled apart,
> America can break your heart.
>
> Bad mannered, perhaps, to the country of his adoption, like that other famous casualty of his purge, "1st September 1939"? For the same reason, I suppose, his poem on Oxford has been carefully but fiercely castrated; it's bad form for a Professor of Poetry to talk about "these quadrangles where Wisdom honours herself" . . .

Alvarez may be performing with an eye on the reader here, but he also has an eye on the poems, and his shrewd guesses about them both tell me something limiting with regard to Auden's poetry and make Alvarez's general praise of it more convincing. "Smooth out your

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voices if you want to be saved" Hampshire quotes from William James. Salvation for the reviewer, if there is such a thing, doesn't lie in invariably smoothing out your voice, as Hampshire does, into one unflappable performance after another.

Richard Hoggart would probably not relish being tagged (or Krimmed) as a New Communicator, but the richness of his earlier book *The Uses of Literacy* was heavily dependent on the intelligent confession he made of his own working-class upbringing. His new title makes it clear that the communicative attempt is still uppermost in his mind. I should perhaps disqualify myself from judging most of the "About Society" essays, since as a non-Englishman I couldn't despite good will care much about looking over pieces from the last ten years titled "The Arts and State Support," "The BBC and Society," or "Education in the Next Few Decades," with their over-present sense of back issues from the *Listener* and *New Statesman,* or various responsible panels and symposia. Part of the trouble lies in Hoggart's own decency and even-temperedness: he writes about George Orwell that "In spite of his frequent wrong-headedness we recognize in him a passionate concern. All of us may not be able to accept all his moral solutions; but we are bound to respect his moral stance." Yet these are tepid remarks: why not substitute "Because of" for "In spite of" in the first sentence? The answer is that Richard Hoggart, unlike Orwell, is never wrong-headed, and that nobody could disagree with any of the "moral solutions" he proposes. And so one finds oneself agreeing and agreeing that "Like the other arts, literature is involved with ends beyond itself. Things can never be quite the same again after we have read—really read—a good book" ("Why I Value Literature"); or that, "What the novel can supremely give is a sense of the texture of life as it is lived; and of the way in which that texture is all the time shot through with moral choices" ("Literature and Society"); or from the same essay, "It is as hard to describe the imaginative whole that is a great work of literature as to describe a symphony or a great painting." "Obviously, there is no simple answer," he tells us over and over again until we yearn for some irresponsible, indecent and simple answer to be entertained just for the second.

Perhaps it is a mistake to write essays titled "Literature and Society" or "Why I Value Literature" unless you are a more perverse, selfish or idiosyncratic sensibility than Hoggart. At any rate I came to attention and felt more alive when, for example, Graham Greene's rhetoric is accurately described and criticized (in Hoggart's essay "The Force of Caricature") or when he makes full use of himself as a distinct character, as in the essay "Growing Up" or the appreciation of Bonamy Dobrée; or when he suggests things about teaching literature to adults, or gives some hints about ways a school of literature and contemporary culture—like the one he now runs at Birmingham—might operate. Finally, three excellent pages on tone of voice in

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D. H. Lawrence's poetry made me feel how good Mr. Hoggart can be on such matters and made me regret how few of these six hundred odd pages are devoted to poets or poems.

Mary McCarthy doesn't have much time for poets either,[4] but she tends to choose hard writers and hard books for her consideration—*Pale Fire, Madame Bovary,* Burroughs, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Nathalie Sarraute—and her engagement with their language is so complete that she emerges as a critic not of text, but texture (in Nabokov's formulation) as well as a bona fide philosophical critic in Hampshire's sense. Unlike Hampshire, the range of tone in her voice creates witty dramatizings of the ideas she contemplates, as in the book's closing essay on treatments of nature in literature, where she remarks that:

> An *awareness* of being "at one" with Nature, however, begins to constitute an intrusion. That is, two fishermen pulling in a net on the seashore appear natural, but two poets brooding side by side on the same strand would be ridiculous—one solitude too many.

That last phrase does it by making a good point with the full resources of style. To read Mary McCarthy you have to be constantly awake. There is no filler that can be skipped, or relaxed winks to the reader assuring him he needn't work too hard for the next page or two; whatever you miss is to your disadvantage, and most of the essays need to be reread, preferably after a second look at the particular book under consideration.

What keeps one awake is the sound of a voice always talking *to* you, varying itself in pitch and delivery as the subject demands. This is not to praise her for lively shock-value, as in the phrase "I'll bet Mary McCarthy could do a job on *that* one." In fact readers with the image foremost of the Lady Mary as wicked wasp will find it quite irrelevant to this book; whatever cleverness there is, and there is plenty, operates in the service of literature. These claims can be substantiated by looking at the brilliant essay on *Pale Fire* which when published was received with some disbelief, as if *all that* couldn't be true about the book, therefore Nabokov must have written it himself. But it is all true, acute and totally informed: in *Pale Fire*

> The world is a sportive work of art, a mosaic, an iridescent tissue. Appearance and "reality" are interchangeable; all appearance, however deceptive, is real. Indeed it is just this faculty of deceptiveness (natural mimicry, trompe l'oeil, imposture), this power of imitation, that provides the key to Nature's cipher. Nature has "the artistic temperament"; the galaxies, if scanned, will be an iambic line.

Here is a mind working as hard and cannily as Nabokov's—the only kind of mind incidentally from which we want to read essays on *Pale*

[4] THE WRITING ON THE WALL, by *Mary McCarthy*. Harcourt, Brace & World. $6.75.

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Fire. And how easy and effortlessly playful Mary McCarthy's prose makes it all seem.

Less well-known and on a less popular writer than Nabokov, but equally deep and firm in its understanding, is the long essay called "The Inventions of I. Compton-Burnett." This admirable novelist, as spare and saving of words as Nabokov is prodigal, demands at least equal inventive resources from the critic. Considering the way characters in Ivy Compton-Burnett novels are furnished with hand-me-down maxims to cover any situation ("No news is good news," "To know all is to forgive all," and hundreds more) the critic begins to invent:

> Such aphoristic sayings, by dint of hypnotized study, become enigmatic, turn upside down, inside out. When time hangs heavy, there is always that resource. You can shake them, stand them wrong side up, take the stuffing out of them, examine their insides. It is a pastime that does not pall, except occasionally on the reader, and is never outgrown.

Precisely, right down to the last admission. What Mary McCarthy has done here and in the following passage, indeed all through the essay, is with the best will in the world to just for the moment do the novelist one better. I had remembered the tyrannical presence of Cassius Clare in *The Present and the Past,* but not this fully and emphatically:

> He is already there. His voice is unnaturally loud; [he] . . . seems to be equipped with a personal amplifying system. The family tyrant has the floor in perpetuity. Permanently wired for sound, he or she soliloquizes, surrounded by a silence. He harangues, accuses, complains. The questions he addresses to his household are mainly rhetorical—they seldom anticipate an answer, at least not the one they get. Or else they *enforce* an answer, with the dreadful command: "Say something! Are you dumb?" . . . . The refusal to hear is the supreme assertion of his power over discourse; it reduces the voice of his wife (or other dependent) to a meaningless noise.

It becomes evident, if we didn't know it already, that texture, not text, is where Ivy Compton-Burnett's genius shows itself; so that although Mary McCarthy doesn't write about poets, she does in a sense after all—by engaging with the texture of a novel. Or of Orwell, on whom most critics can sound dull indeed as they once more remind us of how decent a man he was. Mary McCarthy thinks he's decent too, but she is critically inventive about the texture of his rhetoric, about

> . . . the habit of making avowals to his readers, often in a truculent manner. For instance he admits suddenly that he has never

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> been able to dislike Hitler. Such a confession "expects" that the reader feels the same but has not the bravado to declare it . . . if you think you dislike Hitler, you are a hypocrite or a toady of fashion and you had better think again. The same with such phrases as "the pansy Left," "the successive literary cliques which have infested this country," "hordes of shrieking poseurs," Blimpish summons to the boor in the reader's heart to emerge with a safe-conduct.

Except for her ever exceptional *Stones of Florence* this new collection seems to me Mary McCarthy's best book.

The same can't be said for Randall Jarrell's posthumous collection[5] only because *Poetry and the Age* isn't about to be improved upon. The new title is derived from a list of essays Jarrell made out before he died with the words "3rd criticism book" written at the top, and I suppose the only reasonable way to think about the title is to realize regretfully that he wasn't here to improve on it. Whenever a bright student in my class asks me what to read about Frost or Stevens or Williams, or about Just Modern Poetry in General, I frown a bit, then ask him whether he's read Jarrell's essays, since I know that reading this kind of "secondary material" will be, if not liberating, at least not stultifying. The student won't be locked into the right interpretation of this or that poem; indeed it may occur to him as he reads Jarrell that all you need be to write good criticism is incredibly well-read, extremely knowing and caring about the life you live and extremely curious about the ones you, and the writers, imagine for other people. Add to that a style of immense performing powers. Speaking of Jarrell's criticism, Leslie Fiedler rose admirably to the occasion:

> He is everywhere the man who has *just* read something he loves or hates, sometimes the man baffled by what surprised him into admiration or exacerbated him beyond patience by its ineptitude; but always the man speaking his passion, rather than an embodied institution pronouncing judgment. He is resolutely unsystematic, committed to no methodology or aesthetic theory—responsible only to his own responses, hushed only before the mystery of his own taste. And what unfailing taste he possessed; though its roots were in something nearer to madness than to method, given or endured rather than earned or sought, and therefore most offensive, as any talent is offensive, to those who resist believing in predestination.

What madness it is, for example, to write a forty-page essay commenting on virtually every line of Frost's "Home Burial." What is the taste or talent so offensively sure of itself that it can claim Christina

[5] THE THIRD BOOK OF CRITICISM, by *Randall Jarrell*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $7.50.

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Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children* is a better novel than most of the ones people call great?

But at the center of this book, and of Jarrell's critical achievement as a whole, are his essays on modern poets: in this volume Stevens, Auden (twice) and Robert Graves. The "method" is unvarying: a setting out, from evidence of the poems and the biography, of the poet's main attitude (in Auden, it is the changes of attitude which interest Jarrell); an attempt to distinguish the best poems from the second or third-best (with Stevens and Graves, as in the Frost essays, Jarrell provides lists—the invitation is to check out the list, not memorize it); an attempt to sum up and salute the poet's work, i.e. why and how it has given Jarrell so much reading pleasure. Nothing could be simpler; nothing more difficult of accomplishment. Throughout the essays, always in an offhand, metaphorically illustrative manner, run analogies with music that suggest why Jarrell is so secure in his taste, especially when it involves listening to effects. A parenthesis from the retrospective essay on Stevens: ("Often it is as if Stevens didn't want the poetic equivalent of sonata form, and had gone back to earlier polyphonic ways, days when the crescendo was still uninvented.") A page before he has characterized the poems he didn't like in *Auroras of Autumn* as "transcendental, all too transcendental études." In a time and place where, to adapt Jarrell's own phrase, most criticism of poetry sounds as if it were written on a typewriter *by* a typewriter, the knowledge that a critic is listening to the poem instead of just writing about it, startles with a fine surprise.

Then there are the satisfying ways that common sense, what any fool should know if he had a thought in his head, is made to reveal about the poet something we didn't quite know. On Auden: "When he writes a popular song, it is always a pleasure to see critics discovering that he is 'influenced by popular songs'; which is like finding that Eliot's poems in French are 'influenced by the French language,' or like finding Tchaikovsky's *Mozartiana* 'influenced by Mozart.'" Yet this common sense, which usually means for Jarrell comic sense, is not merely turned against an easy target like "critics"; he is sure enough of his admirations to know that full and convincing praise of a poet's work means that some adverse comment on it, however slight, must also be involved. Thus Jarrell's greatness as a critic of Frost's poetry was inseparable from his readiness to etch, in sharply comic or grotesque phrases, The Only Genuine Robert Frost in Captivity; to see Stevens as G. E. Moore at the Spinet; Richard Wilbur as the Southern Girl with such a lovely accent (for which she was praised) that she ended up sounding like Amos and Andy. A prime example of such grotesque creation occurs in the marvelous 1941 essay on Auden which later criticism has simply pretended doesn't exist. Discussing the poet's habit of making "capitalized personified abstractions" out of everything, Jarrell says,

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> But at last even his ingenuity disappears; he is like a man who will drink canned heat, rubbing alcohol, anything. There is a thirteen-line menagerie where I Will, I Know, I Am, I Have Not, and I Am Loved peer idiotically from behind their bars; nearby, gobbling peanuts, throng the Bothered-One, the Not-Alone, the Just, the Happy-Go-Lucky, the Filthy, hundreds of We's and They's and Their's and Our's and Me's, the Terrible Demon, the Lost People, the Great, the Old Masters, and the Unexpected; they feel Love and Hate and Lust and Things; above them hover all sorts of tutelary deities: the Present, the Past, the Future, the Just City, the Good Place, Fate, Pride, Charity . . . Collective Man, the Generalized Life, the Meaning of Knowing, the Flower of the Ages and Real Estate. Reading *Another Time* is like attending an Elks' Convention of the Capital Letters . . . this is a squeamish business, a pilgrimage through some interminable Vegetarians' Cafeteria.

If you think this kind of criticism is just good fun, or a break from serious concerns, or not getting at the center of Auden's work, then your heart and mind will not, as mine do, go out to Jarrell. Like so many other moments in his essays, it has taught me more about the poet by bringing to awareness my half-formed feelings or half-way thoughts about what reading him was like.

It is finally Jarrell's catholicity that is so rare and continually unexpected: he loved Frost *and* Stevens; Yeats *and* Graves; Rilke and Williams and Ransom and Robert Lowell. This volume doesn't contain his essay on Yeats and it's to be hoped that the collected essays when they appear will remedy the omission. And why no essay on Eliot? That one was never written; in place of it these few sentences from an omnibus run-through on "Fifty Years of American Poetry" will do for him and perhaps, with the necessary adjustments, for Randall Jarrell as well:

> Won't the future say to us in hopeless astonishment: "But did you actually believe that all those things about objective correlatives, classicism, the tradition, applied to *his* poetry? Surely you must have seen that he was one of the most subjective and daemonic poets who ever lived, the victim and helpless beneficiary of his own inexorable compulsions, obsessions? . . . If the reasons you gave were often the wrong reasons, the poet and the poems you loved were the right poet and the right poems; so far as Eliot is concerned, your age can be satisfied with itself."

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BERNARD BERGONZI

Little Aldous and the Cockroach Man

TAKEN TOGETHER, RONALD CLARK'S COMPOSITE BIOGRAPHY of the Huxley family and Grover Smith's edition of Aldous Huxley's letters[1] cover an extraordinary chapter in English cultural history, whether one looks at it genetically or sociologically. Thomas Huxley was born in 1825, the seventh child of the manager of a savings bank. Despite his very limited formal schooling, he managed to acquire the rudiments of a medical training, and in 1846 he was commissioned as assistant-surgeon on H.M.S. *Rattlesnake,* a naval vessel which was about to start on a long voyage of exploration of the coasts of Australia and New Guinea. His real interest was in natural science rather than medicine, and the zoological discoveries he made on the voyage established his reputation and made him a member of the Royal Society before he was twenty-six. He became a vehement defender and expositor of Darwin's ideas, and his prodigious labour as researcher, populariser of science, controversialist and pioneer of state education, made Huxley, for all his iconoclastic opinions, a pillar of the Victorian establishment, even if on its radical wing. He became Secretary and then President of the Royal Society; a governor of Eton; a trustee of the British Museum. And, finally, towards the end of his life, one of Her Majesty's Privy Councillors; in Mr. Clark's words, "looking up from his kneeling position before the Queen when he was invested, he found that she too had wondered what the strange creature was like and had fixed her beady eyes upon him." Thomas Huxley emerges from Mr. Clark's account as one of the intellectual giants of his age and an incomparable educator; he was also a man for whom the gulf between science and the humanities—so worrying to the late-twentieth century mind—simply didn't exist; he was, to his fingertips, both man of science and man of letters. On the voyage of the *Rattlesnake,* in the midst of all his zoological investigations, he contrived to read Dante in the original with the help of a dictionary. He was also a devoted family man, with a deep attachment to his children, though he could hardly have foreseen the extent to which his example and ideals were to be propagated by a later generation of Huxleys.

Thomas Huxley's second son, Leonard, was a less emphatic character, though a man of great intellectual and literary competence. After spending the first part of his life as a schoolmaster he went into

[1] THE HUXLEYS, by *Ronald W. Clark.* McGraw-Hill. $8.95. LETTERS OF ALDOUS HUXLEY, edited by *Grover Smith.* Harper & Row. $15.00.

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publishing and became, at length, editor of the *Cornhill.* His poems and essays had their admirers, but his principal achievements were the large biographies he wrote, first, of his father, and then of another distinguished Victorian scientist, Sir Joseph Hooker. There are versions of Leonard, presented with rather less than total sympathy, in the fiction of his son, Aldous. Leonard's first wife, Julia, was a niece of Matthew Arnold and a sister of Mrs. Humphry Ward; if one believes in genetic factors one must conclude that the Huxley strain received an important reinforcement in this match, and the results were evident in Leonard Huxley's sons, Julian and Aldous (his eldest son, Trevenen, committed suicide at the age of twenty-five). Though even without the added boost of Arnold genes, Huxleys could still excel: one of Leonard's sons by a second marriage was awarded the Nobel prize for physiology in 1963, and, as Mr. Clark shows in his fascinating book, various other grandchildren of Thomas Huxley were conspicuously high achievers.

The genetic element in the prolonged Huxley success story is too speculative to do more than merely note in passing. What is more immediately discussable is the way in which the Huxley family fitted into a striking pattern in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century English cultural life. It was a time when a small number of famous families played a large part in the intellectual, professional and administrative life of the country, and their names often recur in the biographies and memoirs that look back on that period: the Stephens, the Stracheys, the Darwins, the Oliviers. To appropriate a useful bit of neo-Marxist terminology, they exercised an active cultural hegemony, and the Huxleys were perhaps the most brilliant of all. Individual members of those families still continue to make their mark, but the high point of their hegemony had passed by the nineteen-thirties, when other cultural forces emerged. Young men from the working or lower-middle classes were beginning to find their way up the ladder, thanks to the gradual spread of educational opportunity. And Continental refugees gave a different direction to intellectual developments: indeed, the English Marxist writer, Perry Anderson, has suggested in an interesting but excessively simplified reading of recent cultural history that from the thirties onward hegemony was increasingly exercised by emigrés whose backgrounds were Austrian or Polish and whose cast of mind was inherently conservative (in Anderson's view, refugees from Germany were more naturally progressive or radical, and went on to the United States): he lists such names as Wittgenstein, Malinowski, Namier, Popper, Gombrich, and Melanie Klein. According to Anderson, their influences substituted a conservative or at least sceptical view of life for the generally liberal ethos of the English hegemonic families. Anderson's argument has been sharply attacked and it is far too selective to hold water in the form in which he has advanced it;

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nevertheless it does represent an attempt to understand what happened to English culture after the earlier pattern had started to break up.

The ways in which the pattern changed can be seen in the careers of Thomas Huxley's two most celebrated grandsons, Julian and Aldous. Sir Julian Huxley, the older by seven years, has carried on in an astonishingly faithful way the ideals and achievements of Thomas Huxley, and represents a living link with the ambitious young scientist who embarked on the *Rattlesnake* in 1846. After a thorough classical training at Eton he distinguished himself in Zoology at Oxford. While only in his mid-twenties he became director of the biology department at the Rice Institute in Houston; then, after the First World War, he was for some years a lecturer at Oxford, and briefly a professor at King's College, London. Julian Huxley was like his grandfather in combining an immense amount of original research and writing with a passion for scientific education and popularization, a passion for which he found endless scope during his seven years as Secretary of the London Zoo. (His taste for modern publicity methods also made him many enemies.) He was a great exponent of the larger philosophical and social questions that arose from the scientific attitude, and he wrote and lectured extensively on these topics in the atmosphere of plain living and high thinking that flourished in England during the Second World War. And, like Thomas Huxley, he was a man of wide general culture; when, in 1946, he became the first Director-General of UNESCO it was acknowledged that one of his qualifications was his familiarity with virtually all aspects of the Organization's work. Julian Huxley has happily spanned the Two Cultures, and once published a volume of poems; he has always related research to education, and has tirelessly devoted himself to public service. In all these ways he has remained true to the example of the great founder of the Huxleys, and embodied a set of essentially Victorian ideals.

In Julian's younger brother, Aldous, we see some parallels, and a significant divergence. Even as a child he seems to have been rather weighed down by his illustrious heritage, although the schoolboy letters at the beginning of Mr. Smith's collection are pleasantly high-spirited. Aldous Huxley was always burdened by his physique, particularly the immensely long legs that gave him, as an adult, a height of well over six feet; here, undoubtedly, lay one cause of Huxley's life-long preoccupation with the influence of physical factors on human personality. An even more crucial factor was the eye-disease that completely blinded him for a while in his teens, and necessitated his withdrawal from Eton; throughout his life he suffered from desperately defective vision. Although Aldous knew a lot about science, as about most other things, and had originally intended to become a doctor, after his period of blindness he turned to

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literature in a more decisive way than the other members of his family. At Oxford he even elected to read English Literature rather than Classics or mathematics or science, and English at that time was a suspect parvenu subject. In 1915 he got to know Lady Ottoline Morrell and the other members of the Garsington circle, and soon afterwards published his first poems. His poetry was witty and polished and heavily influenced by the dandified melancholy of Laforgue, whom Huxley had discovered for himself as an undergraduate. T. S. Eliot, with whom Huxley became friendly in 1917, had passed through his own Laforguian phase several years before and had thoroughly absorbed the French poet: he felt, rightly, that Huxley was using Laforgue in an immature and excessively derivative way. A similar point might have been made a few years later, after Huxley had become a novelist, about his use of Gide's *Faux-Monnayeurs* in *Point Counter Point.* Given his extraordinary abilities and intellectual powers, Aldous Huxley might have been successful in any one of half-a-dozen fields of activity. And to a great extent he did succeed as a man of letters; after a difficult period when he was trying to get established, and supporting himself and his wife by a great deal of journalistic writing, he made a respectable breakthrough with his first novel, *Crome Yellow,* in 1921. In Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* published in the same year, there is a mysterious reference to Thomas Huxley's grandson occupying "an unassailable position in the English literary world of today": the reference was, to say the least of it, premature, and Huxley, who had never met Proust, confessed his bafflement to a correspondent forty years later.

During the twenties, Huxley achieved a great reputation for intellectual brilliance and world-weary sophistication, and he was seen, like Scott Fitzgerald, as the literary epitome of the decade. Certainly Huxley's novels of the twenties—*Crome Yellow, Antic Hay, Those Barren Leaves,* and *Point Counter Point*—remain works of undeniable charm and wit and readability. Being largely *romans à clef,* they have considerable documentary interest as reflections of life at Garsington, or among wealthy English expatriates in Italy, or in the fashionable London bohemia that was exposed by Wyndham Lewis in *The Apes of God* and which provided, a little later, the setting of the early novels of Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell. Yet the comparison with Fitzgerald inevitably points to Huxley's limitations as a literary artist: he was, in the last analysis, more interested in ideas than in the imaginative transformation of experience, and the interest of his novels is not radically different from that of his many brilliant essays. Huxley himself admitted as much in a letter to his old friend E. S. P. Haynes in 1945: "I remain sadly aware that I am not a born novelist, but some other kind of man of letters, possessing enough ingenuity to be able to simulate a novelist's behaviour not too uncon-

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vincingly." By now, Huxley's novels, once so fashionable, seem to have declined to about the right level of moderate public esteem; in addition to the ones I have mentioned, *Brave New World* remains important as an anti-utopian speculation.

Huxley's collected letters, though dauntingly numerous, are not, on the whole, very interesting. He was a fluent, dutiful correspondent, much given to discussing in a relaxed, discursive way the ideas or books that currently interested him. There is enough self-revelation in Huxley's fiction to suggest that his nature was racked with a number of crucial obsessions and contradictions, but we find little trace of them in his correspondence. There is a relevant passage in a letter from D. H. Lawrence to Lady Ottoline Morrell, written in February 1929, after a visit from Aldous and Maria Huxley:

> I think the *Counter-Point* book sort of got between them—she found it hard to forgive the death of the child—which one can well understand. But, as I say, there's more than one self to everybody, and the Aldous that writes those novels is only one little Aldous amongst others—probably much nicer—that don't write novels—I mean it's only one of his little selves that writes the book and makes the child die, it's not *all* himself. No, I don't like his books: even if I admire a sort of desperate courage of repulsion and repudiation in them. But again, I feel only half a man writes the books—a sort of precocious adolescent. There is surely much more of a man in the actual Aldous.

The little Aldous that wrote the letters was certainly nicer than the one that wrote the novels, which contain many passages of gratuitous horror like the death of the child from meningitis in *Point Counter Point*. Amongst Huxley's later novels *Ape and Essence* points to an extraordinarily intense and obsessive loathing of human life. Ronald Clark, whose virtues as a biographer don't extend to literary criticism, admits that *Ape and Essence* is a rather extreme book, but denies that its peculiar quality reflects anything of its author's personality, saying that it merely shows Huxley's urgent concern with the fate of humanity after a nuclear holocaust. I am sure there was much more behind the book than that, but whatever it is isn't indicated in Huxley's letters.

Nevertheless, they do contain quite piquant illustrations of themes that recur throughout his fiction and essays, notably his concern with the inadequacy of the body and all the weaknesses that beset it. In 1918 he asks Ottoline Morrell, "I wonder if you know what means Bertie Russell employed to cure his piles: for I have been slightly afflicted of late by that 'distressing but almost universal complaint,'" and such preoccupations recur throughout his life; in 1936 a letter to McKnight Kauffer is minutely concerned with the benefit Huxley received from "the washing out of the intestine (by a course of colonic

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lavage) and the receiving of two injections of a vaccine prepared from the pathogenic organisms found in the faeces. . . ." In 1954 he is giving his son and daughter-in-law detailed instructions about the right food to give small children to prevent them from becoming "diabolic" at parties. Huxley's confident assumption of medical expertise relates to another central strand in his personality: his endless capacity for accumulating disparate fragments of knowledge. Throughout his life Huxley was an inveterate reader of encyclopaedias, in this respect being very much what Lawrence called "a precocious adolescent," or even the grave child of Eliot's "Animula":

> The pain of living and the drug of dreams
> Curl up the small soul in the window seat
> Behind the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

In his essay "Books for the Journey," Huxley describes the virtues of any single volume of the *Britannica* as a travelling companion (Mr. Clark denies the allegation that Huxley had a special box fitted into his car to enable him to take the whole set of the encyclopaedia around with him): Huxley acknowledges, however, that "a stray volume of the *Encyclopaedia* is like the mind of a learned madman —stored with correct ideas, between which, however, there is no other connection than the fact that there is a B in both." His own mind was rather like that, hence his tiresome practice of strewing his books with extensive deposits of quite unstructured random information, which has never been subjected to any kind of imaginative fusion. When Aldous was a boy, his elder brother, Julian, had quoted to him a remark made by a weary listener to Macaulay's table-talk: "Sir, his information is greater than society requires." Other modern writers, such as Joyce, Beckett and Borges, have had similar inclinations, but unlike Huxley are able to integrate their encyclopaedism into the texture of their writing.

In the final years of his life Huxley was busily involved with a whole range of interests and activities which in any ordinary view of the world would seem mutually irreconcilable, but in Huxley's comprehensive scheme of things all somehow fitted together: orthodox medicine and the most way-out forms of fringe therapy; hypnotism and ESP; spiritualism and Eastern mysticism, and, notoriously, experiments with mescalin and LSD, which he saw as directly opening the doors to transcendent modes of being (in fairness to Huxley, one must point out that he took only small quantities of these drugs, at long intervals, and under expert supervision). This phase produced some curious and entertaining letters, where his life-long encyclopaedism reached heights of inspired nuttiness that are heavily reminiscent of *Bouvard et Pecuchet:*

> I spent some days, earlier this month, at Glen Cove, in the strange household assembled by Puharic—Alice and Mrs. P, behaving to

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> one another in a conspicuously friendly way; Elinor Bond, doing telepathic guessing remarkably well, but not producing anything of interest or value in the mediumistic sitting she gave me; Frances Farrelly, with her diagnostic machine—which Puharic's tests have shown to be merely an instrument, like a crystal ball, for concentrating ESP faculties; Harry, the Dutch sculptor, who goes into trances in the Faraday cages and produces automatic scripts in Egyptian hieroglyphics; Narodny, the cockroach man, who is preparing experiments to test the effects of human telepathy on insects. It was all very lively and amusing—and, I really think, promising. . . .

Such an assembly might have occurred in one of Huxley's novels of the twenties, though described in a spirit of mockery that is quite lacking here. Thomas Huxley's grandson had come a long way, but without ever repudiating the spirit of scientific enquiry.

From an English point of view Huxley's long residence in Los Angeles looks like a crucial influence. Compared with his brother, Julian, who was playing an active part in wartime and postwar English society, and functionally deploying his own polymathic interests in the service of UNESCO, Aldous had undergone a marked process of cultural marginalization, just as his friend Lawrence had a generation earlier. Aldous Huxley had tried to be a novelist, whilst really being, as he admitted, some other kind of man of letters. It was, perhaps, a mistaken endeavour, for the English hegemonic families were not very good at imaginative literature; though they had a modest gift for belle-lettres, their genius was for science and administration: only Virginia Woolf (née Stephen) made very much impact as a literary artist. Otherwise literature fell into the innovating hands of Celts, Americans and other kinds of alien, whose achievement is apparent in the splendid history of the Modern Movement, to which Huxley contributes a footnote rather than a chapter. At the end he had become, in a thoroughly genial way, not just a representative of a great English family, but that traditional type, the English eccentric. And even in Southern California that was something rather special.

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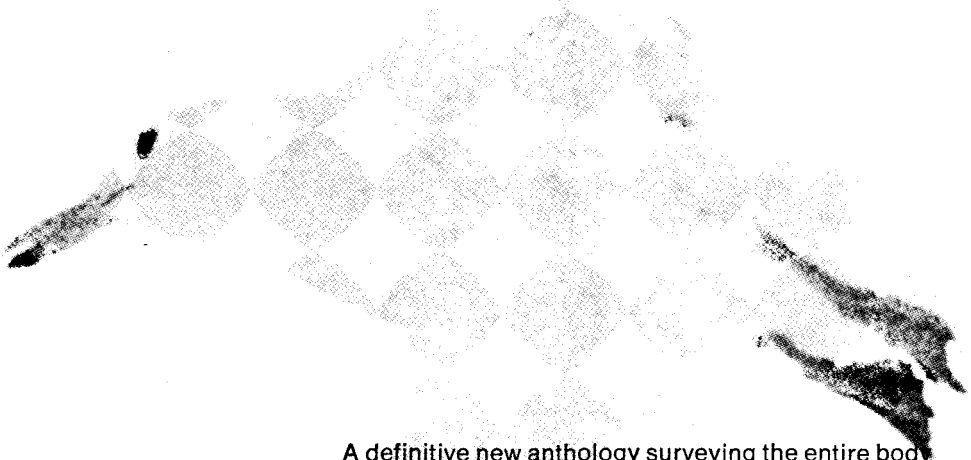

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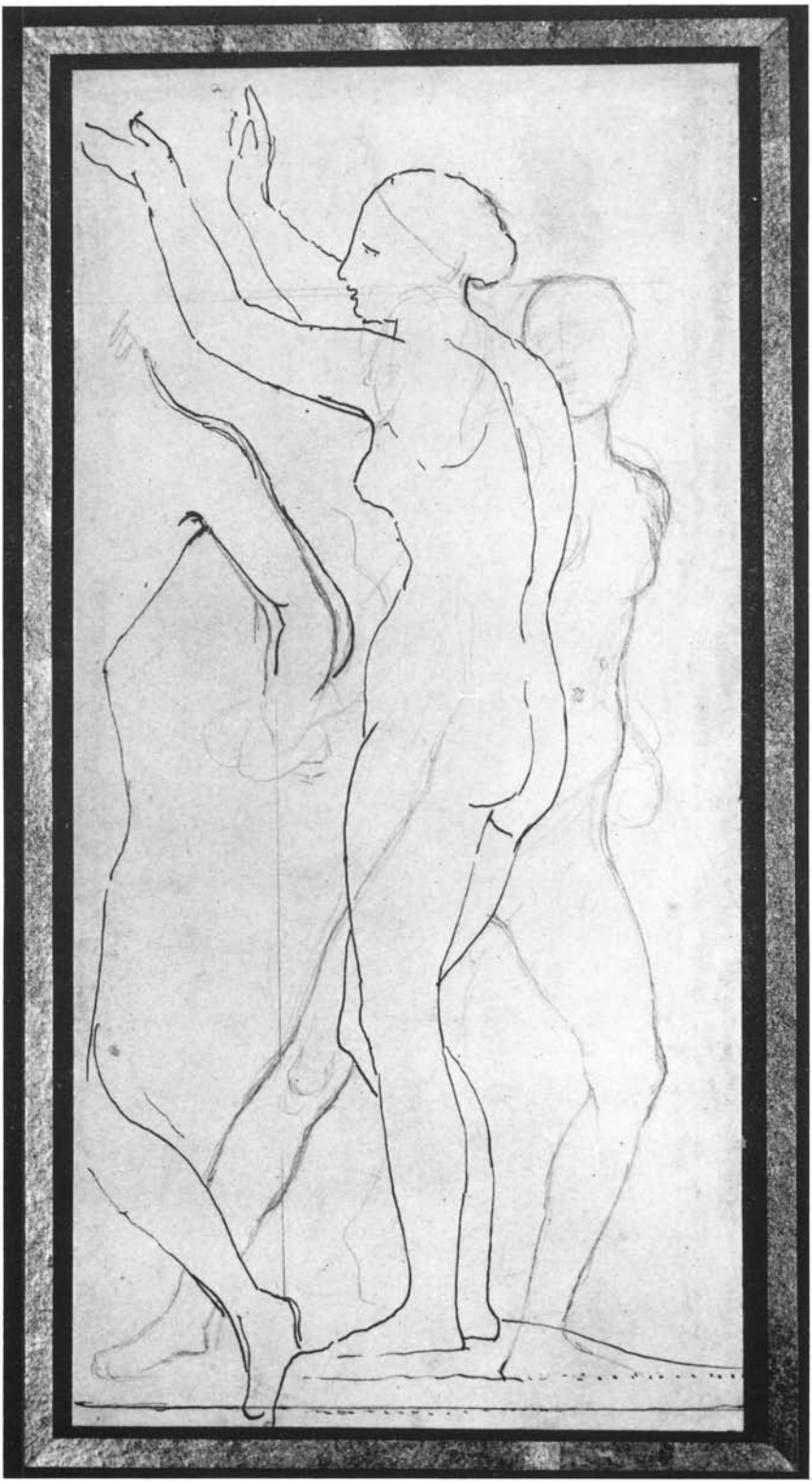

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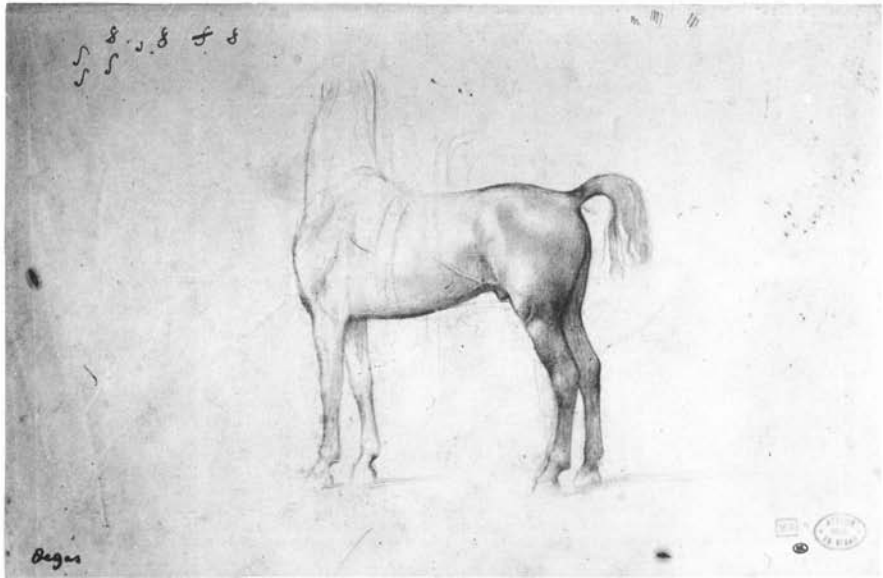

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